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THE ASSUMPTION

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MUNIFICENTISSIMUS DEUS *

THE APOSTOLIC CONSTITUTION
BY WHICH IS DEFINED THE DOGMA OF FAITH
THAT MARY THE VIRGIN MOTHER OF GOD
HAS BEEN ASSUMED INTO HEAVENLY GLORY IN
BODY AND SOUL

PIUS, BISHOP
SERVANT OF THE SERVANTS OF GOD
FOR EVERLASTING REMEMBRANCE

THE MOST BOUNTIFUL GOD, Who is almighty, the plan of Whose providence abides in wisdom and love, tempers, in the secret purpose of His own mind the sorrows of peoples and of individual men by means of joys that He interposes in their lives from time to time, in such a way that, under different conditions and in different ways, all things may work together unto good for those who love Him.¹

Now, just like the present age, Our pontificate is weighed down by ever so many cares, anxieties, and troubles, by reason of very severe calamities that have taken place and by reason of the fact that many have strayed away from truth and virtue. Nevertheless, We are greatly consoled to see that, while the Catholic faith is being professed publicly and vigorously, piety towards the Virgin Mother of God is flourishing and daily growing more fervent, and that almost everywhere on earth it is showing indications of a better and a more holy life. Thus, while the Blessed Virgin is fulfilling in the most affectionate manner her maternal duties on behalf of those redeemed by the blood of Christ, the minds and the hearts of her children

* *Translated by Rev. Joseph C. Fenton, S. T. D., Catholic University of America.*

¹ Cf. *Rom.* 8: 23.

are being vigorously aroused to a more assiduous consideration of her prerogatives.

Actually God, Who from all eternity regards Mary with a most favorable and unique affection has, "when the fulness of time was come,"² put the plan of His providence into effect in such a way that all the privileges and prerogatives He had granted to her in His sovereign generosity were to shine forth in her in a kind of perfect harmony. And, although the Church has always recognized this supreme generosity and the perfect harmony of graces and has daily studied them more and more throughout the course of the centuries, still it is in our own age that the privilege of the bodily Assumption into heaven of Mary, the Virgin Mother of God, has certainly stood forth most clearly.

That privilege has shone forth in new radiance since our predecessor of immortal memory, Pius IX, solemnly proclaimed the dogma of the revered Mother of God's Immaculate Conception. These two privileges are most closely bound to one another. Christ overcame sin and death by His own death, and the man who is born again in a heavenly way through Baptism has conquered sin and death through Christ Himself. Yet, according to His general rule, God does not will to grant the full effect of the victory over death to the just until the end of time shall have come. And so it is that the bodies of even the just are corrupted, and that only on the last day will they be joined, each to its glorious soul.

Now God has willed that the Blessed Virgin should be exempted from this general rule. She, by an entirely unique privilege, completely overcame sin by her Immaculate Conception, and as a result she was not subject to the law of remaining in the corruption of the grave, and she did not have to wait until the end of time for the redemption of her body.

Thus, when it was solemnly proclaimed that Mary, the Virgin Mother of God, was from the very beginning free from the taint of original sin, the minds of the faithful were filled with a stronger hope that the day might soon come when the

² *Gal. 4: 4.*

dogma of the Virgin Mary's bodily Assumption into heaven would also be defined by the Church's supreme teaching authority.

Actually it was seen that not only individual Catholics, but also those who could speak for nations or ecclesiastical provinces, and even a considerable number of the Fathers of the Vatican Council, urgently petitioned the Apostolic See to this effect.

During the course of time such postulations and petitions did not decrease but rather grew continually in number and in urgency. In this cause there were pious crusades of prayer. Many outstanding theologians eagerly and zealously carried out investigations on this subject either privately or in public ecclesiastical institutions and in other schools where the sacred disciplines are taught. Marian Congresses, both national and international in scope, have been held in many parts of the Catholic world. These studies and investigations have brought out into even clearer light the fact that the dogma of the Virgin Mary's Assumption into heaven is contained in the deposit of Christian faith entrusted to the Church. They have resulted in many more petitions, begging and urging the Apostolic See that this truth be solemnly defined.

In this pious striving, the faithful have been associated in a wonderful way with their own holy Bishops, who have sent petitions of this kind, truly remarkable in number, to this See of the Blessed Peter. Consequently, when We were elevated to the throne of the supreme pontificate, petitions of this sort had already been addressed by the thousands from every part of the world and from every class of people, from Our beloved sons the Cardinals of the Sacred College, the Archbishops and the Bishops, from dioceses and from parishes.

Consequently, while We sent up earnest prayers to God that He might grant to Our mind the light of the Holy Ghost to enable Us to make a decision on this most serious subject, We issued special orders in which We commanded that, by corporate effort, more advanced inquiries into this matter should be begun and that, in the meantime, all the petitions about the

Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary into heaven which had been sent to this Apostolic See from the time of Pius IX, Our predecessor of happy memory, down to Our own days should be gathered together and carefully evaluated.³

And, since We were dealing with a matter of such great moment and of such importance, We considered it opportune to ask all Our Venerable Brethren in the episcopate directly and authoritatively that each of them should tell us what he thought in his own words. Hence, on May 1, 1946, We gave them our letter "*Deiparae Virginis Mariae*," a letter in which these words are contained: "Do you, Venerable Brethren, in your outstanding wisdom and prudence, judge that the bodily Assumption of the Blessed Virgin can be proposed and defined as a dogma of faith? Do you, with your clergy and people, desire that it should be?"

But those whom "the Holy Ghost has placed as bishops to rule the Church of God"⁴ gave an almost unanimous affirmative response to both these questions. This "outstanding agreement of the Catholic prelates and the faithful,"⁵ affirming that the bodily Assumption of God's Mother into heaven can be defined as a dogma of faith, since it shows us the concordant teaching of the Church's ordinary doctrinal authority and the concordant faith of the Christian people which the same doctrinal authority sustains and directs, thus by itself and in a way altogether certain and free of all errors, manifested this privilege as a truth revealed by God and contained in that divine deposit which Christ has delivered to His Spouse to be guarded faithfully and to be taught infallibly.⁶ Certainly this teaching authority of the Church, not by any merely human effort but under the protection of the Spirit of Truth,⁷ has carried out the commission entrusted to it, that of preserving the

³ Cf. Hentrich-Von Moos, *Petitiones de Assumptione corporea B. Virginis Mariae in caelum definienda ad S. Sedem delatae*, 2 volumes (Vatican Polyglot Press, 1942).

⁴ *Acts*, 20: 28.

⁵ The Bull *Ineffabilis Deus*, in the *Acta Pii IX*, Pars I, Vol. 1, p. 615.

⁶ Cf. The Vatican Council, Constitution *Dei Filius*, c. 4.

⁷ Cf. *John*, 14: 26.

revealed truths pure and entire throughout every age, in such a way that it presents them undefiled, adding nothing to them and taking nothing away from them. For, as the Vatican Council teaches, "the Holy Ghost was not promised to the successors of Peter in such a way that, by His revelation, they might manifest new doctrine, but so that, by His assistance, they might guard as sacred and might faithfully propose the revelation delivered through the Apostles, or the deposit of faith."⁸ Thus, from the universal agreement of the Church's ordinary teaching authority we have a certain and firm proof, demonstrating that the Blessed Virgin Mary's bodily Assumption into heaven—which surely no faculty of the human mind could know by its own natural powers, as far as the heavenly glorification of the virginal body of the revered Mother of God is concerned—is a truth that has been revealed by God and consequently something that must be firmly and faithfully believed by all the children of the Church. For, as the Vatican Council asserts, "all those things are to be believed by divine and Catholic faith which are contained in the written word of God or in tradition, and which are proposed by the Church, either in solemn judgment or in its ordinary and universal teaching office, as divinely revealed truths which must be believed."⁹

Various testimonies, indications, and signs of this common belief of the Church are evident from remote times down through the course of the centuries; and this same belief becomes more clearly manifest from day to day.

Christ's faithful, through the teaching and the leadership of their pastors, have learned from the sacred books that the Virgin Mary, throughout the course of her earthly pilgrimage, led a life troubled by cares, hardships, and sorrows, and that, moreover, what the holy old man Simeon had foretold actually came to pass, that is, that a most sharp sword had pierced her heart as she stood under the Cross of her divine Son, our Redeemer. In the same way, it was not difficult for them to

⁸ Vatican Council, Constitution *De Ecclesia Christi*, c. 4.

⁹ *Ibid.*, *De fide catholica*, c. 3.

affirm that the great Mother of God, like her only begotten Son, had actually passed from this life. But this in no way prevented them from believing and from professing openly that her sacred body had never been subject to the corruption of the tomb, and that the august tabernacle of the Divine Word had never been reduced to dust and ashes. Actually, enlightened by divine grace and moved by affection for her, God's Mother and our own sweetest Mother, they have contemplated in an ever clearer light the wonderful harmony and order of those privileges which the most provident God has lavished upon this revered associate of our Redeemer, privileges which reach such an exalted plane that, except for her, nothing created by God other than the human nature of Jesus Christ has ever reached this level.

The innumerable temples which have been dedicated to the Virgin Mary assumed into heaven clearly attest this faith. So do those sacred images, exposed everywhere for the veneration of the faithful, which bring this unique triumph of the Blessed Virgin before the eyes of all men. Moreover, cities, dioceses, and individual regions have been placed under the special patronage and guardianship of the Virgin Mother of God assumed into heaven. In the same way, religious institutes, with the approval of the Church, have been founded and have taken their name from this privilege. Nor can we pass over in silence the fact that in the Rosary of Mary, the recitation of which this Apostolic See so urgently recommends, there is one mystery proposed for pious meditation which, as all know, deals with the Blessed Virgin's Assumption into heaven.

This belief of the sacred pastors and of Christ's faithful is manifested still more universally and splendidly by the fact that, since ancient times, there have been both in the East and in the West solemn liturgical offices commemorating this privilege. The holy Fathers and Doctors of the Church have never failed to draw enlightenment from this fact since, as everyone knows, the sacred liturgy, "because it is the profession, subject to the supreme teaching authority within the Church, of

heavenly truths, can supply proofs and testimonies of no small value for deciding any individual point of Christian doctrine.”¹⁰

In the liturgical books which deal with the feast either of the Dormition or of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin there are expressions that agree in testifying that, when the Virgin Mother of God passed from this earthly exile to heaven, what happened to her sacred body was, by the decree of divine providence, in keeping with the dignity of the Mother of the Word Incarnate, and with the other privileges she had been accorded. Thus, to cite an illustrious example, this is set forth in that Sacramentary which Adrian I, Our predecessor of immortal memory, sent to the emperor Charlemagne. These words are found in this volume. “Venerable to us, O Lord, is the festivity of this day on which the holy Mother of God suffered temporal death, but still could not be kept down by the bonds of death, who has begotten Thy Son Our Lord incarnate from herself.”¹¹

What is here indicated in that sobriety characteristic of the Roman liturgy is presented more clearly and completely in other ancient liturgical books. To take one as an example, the Gallican Sacramentary designates this privilege of Mary’s as “a sacrament beyond description, all the more worthy of being preached as the Virgin’s Assumption is something unique among men.” And, in the Byzantine liturgy, not only is the Virgin Mary’s bodily Assumption connected, time and time again, with the dignity of the Mother of God, but also with the other privileges, and in particular with the virginal motherhood granted her by a singular decree of God’s providence. “God, the King of the universe, has granted thee favors that surpass nature. As He kept thee a virgin in childbirth, thus He has kept thy body incorrupt in the tomb and has glorified it by His divine act of transferring it from the tomb.”¹²

The fact that the Apostolic See, which has inherited the function entrusted to the Prince of the Apostles, the function

¹⁰ The encyclical *Mediator Dei* (*Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, XXXIX, 541).

¹¹ *Sacramentarium Gregorianum*.

¹² *Menaei totius anni*.

of confirming the brethren in the faith,¹³ has by its own authority made the celebration of this feast ever more solemn, has certainly and effectively moved the attentive minds of the faithful to appreciate always more completely the magnitude of the mystery it commemorates. So it was that the feast of the Assumption was elevated from that rank which it had occupied from the beginning among the other Marian feasts to be classed among the more solemn celebrations of the entire liturgical cycle. And, when our predecessor St. Sergius I prescribed what is known as the litany or the stational procession to be held on the four Marian feasts, he specified, along with the feast of the Nativity, those of the Annunciation, the Purification, and the Dormition of the Virgin Mary.¹⁴ Again, St. Leo IV saw to it that the feast, which was already being celebrated under the title of the Assumption of the Blessed Mother of God, should be observed in even a more solemn way when he ordered a vigil to be held on the day before it and afterwards prescribed prayers on the octave day. When this had been done, he decided to take part himself in the celebration, in the midst of a great multitude of the faithful.¹⁵ Moreover, the fact that a holy fast had been ordered from ancient times for the day prior to the feast is made very evident by what our predecessor St. Nicholas I testifies in treating of the principal fasts which "the Holy Roman Church has observed for a long time, and still observes."¹⁶

However, since the liturgy of the Church does not engender the Catholic faith, but rather springs from it, in such a way that the practices of the sacred worship proceed from the faith as the fruit comes from the tree, it follows that the holy Fathers and the great Doctors, in the homilies and sermons they gave the people on this feast day, did not draw their teaching from the feast itself as from a primary source, but rather they spoke of this doctrine as something already known and accepted by

¹³ Cf. *Luke*, 22: 32.

¹⁴ *Liber Pontificalis*.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Responsa Nicolai Papae I ad consulta Bulgarorum*.

Christ's faithful. They presented it more clearly. They offered more profound explanations of its meaning and nature, bringing out into sharper light the fact that this feast shows, not only that the dead body of the Blessed Virgin Mary remained incorrupt, but that she gained a triumph out of death, her heavenly glorification after the example of her only begotten Son, Jesus Christ; truths that the liturgical books had frequently touched upon only briefly and in passing.

Thus St. John Damascene, an outstanding herald of this traditional truth, spoke out with powerful eloquence when he compared the bodily Assumption of the revered Mother of God with her other prerogatives and privileges. "It was fitting that she, who had kept her virginity intact in childbirth, should keep her own body free from all corruption even after death. It was fitting that she, who had carried the Creator as a child at her breast, should dwell in the divine tabernacles. It was fitting that the spouse, whom the Father had taken to Himself, should live in the divine mansions. It was fitting that she, who had seen her Son upon the Cross and who had thereby received into her heart the sword of sorrow which she had escaped in the act of giving birth to Him, should look upon Him as He sits at the right hand of the Father. It was fitting that God's Mother should possess what belongs to her Son, and that she should be honored by every creature as the Mother and as the Handmaid of God."¹⁷

These words of St. John Damascene agree perfectly with what others have taught on this same subject. Statements no less clear and accurate are to be found in sermons delivered by Fathers of an earlier time or of the same period, particularly on the occasion of this feast. And so, to cite some other examples, St. Germanus of Constantinople considered the fact that the body of Mary, the Virgin Mother of God, was incorrupt and had been taken up into heaven to be in keeping, not only with her divine motherhood, but also with the special holiness of her virginal body. "Thou art she who, as it is written, appear-

¹⁷ St. John Damascene, *Encomium in dormitionem Dei Genetricis semperque Virginis Mariae*, Hom. II, n. 14; cf. also *ibid.*, n. 3.

est in beauty, and thy virginal body is all holy, all chaste, entirely the dwelling place of God, so that it is henceforth completely exempt from dissolution into dust. Though still human, it is changed into the heavenly life of incorruptibility, truly living and glorious, undamaged and sharing in perfect life.”¹⁸ And another very ancient writer asserts: “As the most glorious Mother of Christ our Saviour and God and the Giver of life and immortality has been endowed with life by Him, she has received an eternal incorruptibility of the body together with Him Who has raised her up from the tomb and has taken her up to Himself in a way known only to Him.”¹⁹

When this liturgical feast was being celebrated ever more widely and with ever increasing devotion and piety, the Bishops of the Church and its preachers in continually greater numbers considered it their duty openly and clearly to explain the mystery that the feast commemorates, and to explain how it is intimately connected with the other revealed truths.

Among the scholastic theologians there were not lacking those who, wishing to inquire more profoundly into divinely revealed truths and desirous of showing the harmony that exists between what is termed the theological reason and the Catholic faith, have considered it worthy of note that this privilege of the Virgin Mary’s Assumption is in wonderful accord with those divine truths given us in Holy Scripture.

When they go on to explain this point, they adduce various proofs to throw light on this privilege of Mary. As the first element of these demonstrations, they insist upon the fact that, out of filial love for His Mother, Jesus Christ has willed that she be assumed into heaven. They base the strength of their proofs on the incomparable dignity of her divine motherhood and of all those prerogatives which follow from it. These include her exalted holiness, entirely surpassing the sanctity of all men and of the angels, the intimate union of Mary with

¹⁸ St. Germanus of Constantinople, *In Sanctae Dei Genetricis Dormitionem*, Sermo I.

¹⁹ The *Encomium in Dormitionem Sanctissimae Dominae Nostrae Deiparae semperque Virginis Mariae*, attributed to St. Modestus of Jerusalem, n. 14.

her Son, and the affection of preeminent love which the Son has for His most worthy Mother.

Often there are theologians and preachers who, following in the footsteps of the holy Fathers,²⁰ have been rather free in their use of events and expressions taken from Sacred Scripture to explain their belief in the Assumption. Thus, to mention a few of the texts frequently cited in this fashion, some have employed the words of the Psalmist: "Arise, O Lord, into thy resting place: thou and the ark, which thou hast sanctified";²¹ and have looked upon the *Ark of the Covenant*, built of incorruptible wood and placed in the Lord's temple, as a type of the most pure body of the Virgin Mary, preserved and exempted from all the corruption of the tomb and raised up to such glory in heaven. Treating of this subject, they also describe her as the queen, entering triumphantly into the royal halls of heaven and sitting at the right hand of the divine Redeemer.²² Likewise they mention the Spouse of the Canticles "that goeth up by the desert, as a pillar of smoke of aromatical spices, or myrrh and frankincense" to be crowned.²³ These are proposed as depicting that heavenly Queen and heavenly Spouse who has been lifted up to the courts of heaven with the divine Bridegroom.

Moreover, the scholastic Doctors have recognized the Assumption of the Virgin Mother of God as something signified, not only in various figures of the Old Testament, but also in that Woman clothed with the Sun, whom John the Apostle contemplated on the island of Patmos.²⁴ Similarly they have given special attention to these words of the New Testament: "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou amongst women,"²⁵ since they saw, in the mystery of the Assumption, the fulfillment of that most perfect grace granted

²⁰ Cf. St. John Damascene, *op. cit.*, Hom. II, n. 11; and also the *Encomium* attributed to St. Modestus.

²¹ *Psalm* 131: 8.

²² *Psalm* 44: 10, 14 ff.

²³ *Cant.* 3: 6; cf. also 4: 8; 6: 9.

²⁴ *Apoc.* 12: 1 ff.

²⁵ *Luke*, 1: 28.

to the Blessed Virgin and the special blessing that countered the curse of Eve.

Thus, during the earliest period of scholastic theology, that most pious man, Amadeus, Bishop of Lausanne, held that the Virgin Mary's flesh had remained incorrupt—for it is wrong to believe that her body has seen corruption—because it was really united again to her soul and, together with it, crowned with great glory in the heavenly courts. "For she was filled with grace and blessed among women."²⁵ She alone merited to conceive the true God of true God, whom, as a virgin, she brought forth, to whom she gave milk, fondling Him upon her breasts, and in all things she waited upon Him with reverent care."²⁶

Among the holy writers who at that time employed statements and various images and analogies of Sacred Scripture to illustrate and to confirm the doctrine of the Assumption, which they piously believed, the Evangelical Doctor St. Anthony of Padua holds a special place. On the feast day of the Assumption, while explaining the Prophet's words: "I will glorify the place of my feet,"²⁷ he stated it as certain that the divine Redeemer had bedecked with supreme glory His most beloved Mother from whom He had received human flesh. He asserts that "you have here a clear statement that the Blessed Virgin has been assumed in her body, which was the place of the Lord's feet." Hence it is that the holy Psalmist writes: "Arise, O Lord, into thy resting place: thou and the ark which thou hast sanctified." And he asserts that, just as Jesus Christ has risen from the death over which He triumphed and has ascended to the right hand of the Father, so likewise the ark of His sanctification "has risen up, since on this day the Virgin Mother has been taken up to her heavenly dwelling."²⁸

When, during the middle ages, scholastic theology was es-

²⁶ Amadeus of Lausanne, *De Beatae Virginis Obitu, Assumptione in caelum, Exaltatione ad Filii dexteram.*

²⁷ *Isaias*, 60: 13.

²⁸ St. Anthony of Padua, *Sermones dominicales et in solemnitatibus, In Assumptione S. Mariae Virginis sermo.*

pecially flourishing, St. Albert the Great who, to establish this teaching, had gathered together many proofs from Sacred Scripture, from the statements of older writers, and finally from the liturgy and from what is known as theological reasoning, concluded in this way. "From these proofs and authorities and from many others, it is manifest that the most blessed Mother of God has been assumed above the choirs of angels. And this we believe in every way to be true."²⁹ And, in a sermon which he delivered on the sacred day of the Blessed Virgin Mary's Annunciation, explaining the words "Hail, full of grace," words used by the angel who addressed her, the Universal Doctor, comparing the Blessed Virgin with Eve, stated clearly and incisively that she was exempted from the fourfold curses that had been laid upon Eve.³⁰

Following the footsteps of his distinguished teacher, St. Thomas Aquinas, the Angelic Doctor, despite the fact that he never dealt directly with this question, nevertheless, whenever he touched upon it, always held, together with the Catholic Church, that Mary's body had been assumed into heaven along with her soul.³¹

Along with many others, St. Bonaventure, the Seraphic Doctor, held the same views. He considered it as entirely certain that, as God had preserved the Most Holy Virgin Mary from the violation of her virginal purity and integrity in conceiving and in childbirth, He would never have permitted her body to have been resolved into dust and ashes.³² Explaining these words of Sacred Scripture: "Who is this that cometh up from the desert, flowing with delights, leaning upon her beloved,"³³ and applying them in a kind of accommodated sense to the Blessed Virgin, he reasons thus: "From this we can see

²⁹ St. Albert the Great, *Mariale*, p. 132.

³⁰ St. Albert the Great, *Sermones de Sanctis*, *Sermo XV in Annuntiatione B. Mariae*; cf. also *Mariale*, q. 132.

³¹ Cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theol.*, IIIa, q. 27, a. 1; q. 83, a. 5, ad 8; *Expositio salutationis angelicae*; *In Symb. Apostolorum expositio*, a. 5; *In IV Sent.*, d. 12, q. 1, a. 3, sol. 3; d. 43, q. 1, a. 3, sol. 1, 2.

³² Cf. St. Bonaventure, *De Nativitate B. Mariae Virginis*, *sermo V*.

³³ *Cant.* 8: 5.

that she is there bodily . . . her blessedness would not have been complete unless she were there as a person. The soul is not a person, but the soul, joined to the body, is a person. It is manifest that she is there in soul and in body. Otherwise she would not possess her complete beatitude.”³⁴

In the fifteenth century, during a later period of scholastic theology, St. Bernardine of Siena collected and diligently evaluated all that the mediaeval theologians had said and taught on this question. He was not content with setting down the principal considerations which these writers of an earlier day had already expressed, but he added others of his own. The likeness between God’s Mother and her divine Son, in the way of the nobility and dignity of body and of soul—a likeness that forbids us to think of the heavenly Queen as being separated from the heavenly King—makes it entirely imperative that Mary “should be only where Christ is.”³⁵ Moreover, it is reasonable and fitting that not only the soul and body of a man, but also the soul and body of a woman should have obtained heavenly glory. Finally, since the Church has never looked for the bodily relics of the Blessed Virgin nor proposed them for the veneration of the people, we have a proof on the order of sensible experience.³⁶

The above-mentioned teachings of the holy Fathers and of the Doctors have been in common use during more recent times. Gathering together the testimonies of the Christians of earlier days, St. Robert Bellarmine exclaimed: “And who, I ask, could believe that the ark of holiness, the dwelling place of the Word of God, the temple of the Holy Ghost, has been reduced to ruin? My soul is filled with horror at the thought that this virginal flesh which had begotten God, had brought Him into the world, had nourished and carried Him, has been turned into ashes or given over to be food for worms.”³⁷

³⁴ St. Bonaventure, *De Assumptione B. Mariae Virginis, sermo I.*

³⁵ St. Bernardine of Siena, *In Assumptione B. Mariae Virginis, sermo II.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ St. Robert Bellarmine, *Conciones habitae Lovanii*, n. 40, *De Assumptione B. Mariae Virginis.*

In like manner St. Francis of Sales, after asserting that it is wrong to doubt that Jesus Christ has Himself observed, in the most perfect way, the divine commandment by which children are ordered to honor their parents, asks this question: "What son would not bring his mother back to life and would not bring her into paradise after her death if he could?"³⁸ And St. Alphonsus writes that "Jesus did not wish to have the body of Mary corrupted after death, since it would have redounded to His own dishonor to have her virginal flesh, from which He Himself had assumed flesh, reduced to dust."³⁹

Once the mystery which is commemorated in this feast had been placed in its proper light, there were many teachers who, instead of dealing with the theological reasonings that show why it is fitting and right to believe the bodily Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary into heaven, chose to focus their mind and attention on the faith of the Church itself, which is the Mystical Body of Christ without stain or spot⁴⁰ and is called by the Apostle "the pillar and ground of truth."⁴¹ Relying on this common faith, they considered the teaching opposed to the doctrine of Our Lady's Assumption as temerarious, if not heretical. Thus, like many others, St. Peter Canisius, after he had declared that the very word "Assumption" signifies the glorification, not only of the soul but also of the body, and that the Church has venerated and has solemnly celebrated this mystery of Mary's Assumption for many centuries, adds these words of warning: "This teaching has already been accepted for ages, it has been held as certain in the minds of the pious people, and it has been taught to the entire Church in such a way that those who deny that Mary's body has been assumed into heaven are not to be listened to patiently, but are everywhere to be denounced as over-contentious or rash men, and as imbued with a spirit that is heretical rather than Catholic."⁴²

³⁸ *Oeuvres de St. François de Sales*, sermon for the feast of the Assumption.

³⁹ St. Alphonsus Liguori, *The Glories of Mary*, Part 2, d. 1.

⁴⁰ Cf. *Eph.* 5: 27.

⁴¹ *I Tim.* 3: 15.

⁴² St. Peter Canisius, *De Maria Virgine*.

At the same time Suarez, *Doctor Eximius*, since he was professing in the field of Mariology this norm that "the mysteries of grace which God has wrought in the Virgin must be measured, not by the ordinary laws, but by the divine omnipotence, supposing the fittingness of the thing, without any contradiction or repugnance on the part of Scripture,"⁴³ could conclude, supported by the common faith of the entire Church on the subject of the mystery of the Assumption, that this mystery was to be believed with the same firmness of assent as that given to the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin. Thus he already held that such truths could be defined.

All these proofs and considerations of the holy Fathers and the theologians are based upon the Sacred Writings as their ultimate foundation. These set the revered Mother of God as it were before our very eyes as most intimately joined to her divine Son and as always sharing His lot. Consequently it seems impossible to think of her, the one who conceived Christ, brought Him forth, gave Him milk, held Him in her arms, and fondled Him at her breast, as being, after this earthly life, apart from Him in body, even though not in soul. Since our Redeemer is the Son of Mary, He could not do otherwise, as the perfect observer of God's law, than to honor, not only His eternal Father, but also His most beloved Mother. And, since it was within His power to grant her this great honor, to preserve her from the corruption of the tomb, we must believe that He really acted in this way.

We must remember especially that, since the second century, the Virgin Mary has been designated by the holy Fathers as the new Eve, who, although subject to the new Adam, is most intimately associated with Him in that struggle against the infernal foe which, as foretold in the protoevangelium,⁴⁴ finally resulted in that most complete victory over the sin and death which are always mentioned together in the writings of the Apostle of the Gentiles.⁴⁵ Consequently, just as the glorious

⁴³ Suarez, *In tertiam partem D. Thomae*, q. 27, a. 2, disp. 3, sec. 5, n. 31.

⁴⁴ *Gen.* 3: 15.

⁴⁵ Cf. *Rom.*, chapters 5 and 6; *I Cor.* 15: 21-26, 54-57.

resurrection of Christ was an essential part and the final sign of this victory, so that struggle which was common to the Blessed Virgin and her divine Son should be brought to a close by the glorification of her virginal body, for the same Apostle says: "when this mortal thing hath put on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: Death is swallowed up in victory."⁴⁶

Hence the revered Mother of God, from all eternity joined in a hidden way with Jesus Christ in one and the same decree of predestination,⁴⁷ immaculate in her conception, a most perfect virgin in her divine motherhood, the noble associate of the divine Redeemer who has won a complete triumph over sin and its consequences, was finally granted, as the supreme culmination of her privileges, that she should be preserved free from the corruption of the tomb and that, like her own Son, having overcome death, she might be taken up body and soul to the glory of heaven where, as Queen, she sits in splendor at the right hand of her Son, the immortal King of the ages.⁴⁸

Since the universal Church, within which dwells the Spirit of Truth who infallibly directs it towards an ever more perfect knowledge of the revealed truths, has expressed its own belief many times over the course of the centuries, and since the Bishops of the entire world have almost unanimously petitioned that the truth of the bodily Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary into heaven should be defined as a dogma of divine and Catholic faith—this truth which is based on the Sacred Writings, which is thoroughly rooted in the minds of the faithful, which has been approved in ecclesiastical worship from the most remote times, which is completely in harmony with the other revealed truths, and which has been expounded and explained magnificently in the work, the science, and the wisdom of the theologians—We believe that the moment appointed in the plan of divine providence for the solemn proclamation of

⁴⁶ *I Cor.* 15: 54.

⁴⁷ The Bull *Ineffabilis Deus*, *loc. cit.*, p. 599.

⁴⁸ Cf. *I Tim.* 1: 17.

this outstanding privilege of the Virgin Mary has already arrived.

We, who have placed our pontificate under the special patronage of the most holy Virgin, to whom We have had recourse so often in times of grave trouble, We who have consecrated the entire human race to her Immaculate Heart in public ceremonies, and who have time and time again experienced her powerful protection, are confident that this solemn proclamation and definition of the Assumption will contribute in no small way to the advantage of human society, since it redounds to the glory of the Most Blessed Trinity, to which the Blessed Mother of God was bound by such singular bonds. It is to be hoped that all the faithful will be stirred up to a stronger piety towards their heavenly Mother, and that the souls of all those who glory in the Christian name may be moved by the desire of sharing in the unity of Christ's Mystical Body and of increasing their love for her who in all things shows her motherly heart to the members of this august Body. And so we may hope that those who meditate upon the glorious example Mary offers us may be more and more convinced of the value of a human life entirely devoted to carrying out the heavenly Father's will and to bringing good to others. Thus, while the illusory teachings of materialism and the corruption of morals that follows from these teachings threaten to extinguish the light of virtue and to ruin the lives of men by exciting discord among them, in this magnificent way all may see clearly to what a lofty goal our bodies and souls are destined. Finally it is our hope that belief in Mary's bodily Assumption into heaven will make our belief in our own resurrection stronger and render it more effective.

We rejoice greatly that this solemn event falls, according to design of God's providence, during this Holy Year, so that we are able, while the great Jubilee is being observed, to adorn the brow of God's Virgin Mother with this new gem, and to leave a monument more enduring than bronze of our own most fervent love for the Mother of God.

For which reason, after we have poured forth prayers of supplication again and again to God, and have called upon the Spirit of Truth, for the glory of Almighty God who has lavished His special affection upon the Virgin Mary, for the honor of her Son, the immortal King of the ages and the Victor over sin and death, for the increase of the glory of that same august Mother, and for the joy and exultation of the entire Church; by the authority of Our Lord Jesus Christ, of the Blessed Apostles Peter and Paul, and by Our own authority, We pronounce, declare, and define it to be a divinely revealed dogma: that the Immaculate Mother of God, the ever Virgin Mary, having completed the course of her earthly life, was assumed body and soul into heavenly glory.

Hence if anyone, which God forbid, should dare wilfully to deny or to call into doubt that which We have defined, let him know that he has fallen away completely from the divine and Catholic faith.

In order that this, Our definition of the bodily Assumption of the Virgin Mary into heaven may be brought to the attention of the universal Church, we desire that these, Our Apostolic Letters, should stand for perpetual remembrance, commanding that written copies of these, or even printed copies, signed by the hand of any public notary and furnished with the seal of a person constituted in ecclesiastical dignity, should, when they are tendered or shown, be accorded by all men the same reception they would give to these present Letters.

It is forbidden to any man to change a page of this, our declaration, pronouncement, and definition or, by rash attempt, to oppose and counter it. If any man should presume to make such an attempt, let him know that he will incur the wrath of almighty God and of the Blessed Apostles Peter and Paul.

Given at Rome, at St. Peter's, in the year of the great Jubilee, 1950, on the first day of the month of November, on the Feast of All Saints, in the twelfth year of Our pontificate.

I, Pius, Bishop of the Catholic Church,
have signed, so defining.

THE ASSUMPTION—AND DEVOTION TO MARY IN AMERICA



MEMORABLE in the history of the Church will ever remain the date of November 1, 1950, for on that day the Reigning Pontiff, Pius XII, proclaimed from St. Peter's Basilica in the Vatican the dogmatic definition of the bodily Assumption of the Virgin Mary into heaven.

Nature could not have prepared a more beautiful day, azure skies serene, the sun refulgent, the waning moon clearly limned above the cupola of Michelangelo—calling spontaneously to mind the words of Sacred Scripture: "A great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon was under her feet" (Apoc. 12 : 1). The standard raised on high carried Titian's representation of the theme of this glorious day: Mary's Assumption into heaven.

The Church was there—*Ecclesia docens* and *Ecclesia discens*. On a magnificent throne at the entrance of the Basilica sat the Sovereign Pontiff, surrounded by an assembly of almost forty Cardinals and over six-hundred-fifty Archbishops and Bishops from every corner of the globe. An unprecedented host of people, devout, almost ecstatic, filled to overflowing the piazza of St. Peter, the piazza of Pius XII, the Via della Conciliazione, and adjacent streets, windows, balconies, and terraces. The United States too was represented by a multitude of laity, a goodly number of Prelates some of whom pertain to the Roman Curia, many priests, and fifteen members of the ecclesiastical Hierarchy.¹

¹ Those present included: His Eminence, Cardinal Spellman, Archbishop of New York; Archbishops Floersh of Louisville, Byrne of Santa Fe, Hurley of St. Augustine, Binz Coadjutor of Dubuque, O'Hara of Savannah-Atlanta, Muench of Fargo; and Bishops Albers of Lansing, O'Hara of Kansas City in Missouri, Leech of Harrisburg, Cotton of Owensboro, Senyshyn Auxiliary for the Ukrainians of the Byzantine rite,

THE DEFINITION

The most solemn act of the supreme magisterium of the Church, a dogmatic definition, was about to take place. In the celestial crown of Mary, like three resplendent stars, shine her Divine Maternity, her Immaculate Conception, and her Assumption into heaven. That Mary is the Θεοτόκος or Mother of God was defined by the Council of Ephesus (431), the third Ecumenical Council; that she was conceived immaculate was defined by Pius IX in the Bull *Ineffabilis Deus* (Dec. 8, 1854); and now the Reigning Pontiff, Pius XII, in his office as supreme Teacher and Shepherd of the universal Church, was about to define *ex cathedra*—that is, to declare in an infallible and irrevocable way—that the fact of the bodily Assumption of Mary into heaven is a truth contained in the deposit of faith, a revealed dogma.

The Holy Father invited those present to join him in prayer, and thereby, as it were, accorded the faithful an active part in this great event. On May 1, 1946 he had likewise addressed himself to the entire Church in his Letter *Deiparae Virginis Mariae*, appealing to the Bishops:

“ Ut Nobis significare velitis qua devotione, pro sua quisque fide ac pietate, clerus populusque moderamini vestro commissus Beatissimae Virginis Mariae Assumptionem prosequatur. Praesertim autem nosse quam maxime cupimus an vos, Venerabiles Fratres, pro eximia vestra sapientia et prudentia censeatis Assumptionem corpoream Beatissimae Virginis tamquam dogma fidei proponi ac definiri posse, et an id cum clero et populo vestro exoptetis.”

The consent could not be other than universal, and so it was.

Firm and constant testimony to this truth is found in the ordinary magisterium of the Church; in the belief of pastors and faithful throughout the centuries in both Orient and Occident; in the ancient Liturgies and especially in feasts instituted under such varied titles as Mary's *Dormitio*, *Pausatio*, *Transitus*, *Assumptio*, with vigils and octaves; in many homilies

Ready of Columbus, McNulty Auxiliary of Newark, and Ivancho Exarch for the Podocarpathan Ruthenians of the Byzantine rite.

and writings of the Fathers and the Doctors of the Church; in countless monuments such as churches and shrines; in a word, so harmonious and uninterrupted is the tapestry of testimony that this truth could not but be a true echo of divine-apostolic tradition resounding through the ages. As in the Old World, so too in the New, the title of the Assumption was appropriated not only for altars and churches, but even for cities and entire regions. Among the churches bearing this title may be counted a number of Cathedrals, like that of Baltimore, the first episcopal See in the United States.²

Finally, at the height of that glorious morning, the Vicar of Christ, in clear and vibrant tones carried far and wide through loudspeakers, *pronounced, declared, and defined* this dogma as divinely revealed, viz.:

“Immaculatam Deiparam semper Virginem Mariam, expleto terrestri vite cursu, fuisse corpore et anima ad caelestem gloriam assumptam.”

Thereupon all the Church militant seemed joined with the Heavenly Jerusalem in one single temple and one single voice, as irrepressible acclamations and endless applause broke forth, followed by the jubilant singing of the *Te Deum* and the *Credo* in Latin, and concluding with hymns and praises of the Virgin in divers tongues, pouring forth, as it were, from one heart and one soul.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DEFINITION FOR US

The event of the definition of the Assumption—at which God graciously granted us the privilege of being present—is already woven into the fabric of history. Its effects, however, will reverberate through the centuries to come, bringing forth flowers and fruits of faith and of love. Good faithful, inspired by sentiments of piety, have already begun to ask themselves the import, the value, and the practical application of this definition for individuals and for society.

² Others Cathedrals in the United States dedicated to the Assumption are those of San Francisco, Louisville, Fall River, and Evansville.

In the Apostolic Constitution *Munificentissimus Deus* which defines this truth, the Sovereign Pontiff expresses the hope that the solemn proclamation and definition of the Assumption will contribute in no small way to the advantage of human society: "that all the faithful will be stirred up to a stronger piety towards their heavenly Mother"; "that those who meditate upon the glorious example Mary offers us may be more and more convinced of the value of a human life entirely devoted to carrying out the Heavenly Father's will and to bringing good to others"; and "that belief in Mary's bodily Assumption into heaven will make our belief in our own resurrection stronger and render it more effective." Clearly, the Sovereign Pontiff in voicing these hopes had in mind all his children, embraced in his universal paternity. We, therefore, will consider how these particular hopes and appeals of the Holy Father may be applied to ourselves and this great country.

INCREASE IN PIETY TOWARDS MARY

It is the desire of the Holy Father first of all that this definition bring about an increase in our piety towards the Virgin Mother. Devotion to Mary has ever been an outstanding characteristic of the faithful of America, particularly in regard to her Immaculate Conception, a privilege which, as theologians point out, is connected with that of her Assumption. In the Sixth Provincial Council of Baltimore (1846) the Bishops of America proclaimed the Blessed Virgin Mary Immaculate as Patroness of the Church in the United States, and decided moreover, to ask the Holy See's permission to insert the word "Immaculate" in the Divine Office and Mass of December 8th, and to include in the Litany of the Blessed Virgin the invocation: "Queen, conceived without original sin, pray for us." Their petition was most gladly granted. This tribute to Mary rebounds to the great honor of America inasmuch as it took place eight years before the definition of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception.

In the Seventh Provincial Council of Baltimore, celebrated

in 1849, the Bishops, in reply to Pius IX's Encyclical Letter inquiring about the devotion of the clergy and laity in regard to the Immaculate Conception, gave full assurance that this devotion was practiced with sincere and lively ardor throughout the United States, and submitted a petition to the Supreme Pontiff that he define, as a dogma of faith, the exemption of Mary from original sin from the first instant of her conception. In the same Council, among the *Acclamationes* at the third session, was the following: *Beatissimae Virgini Mariae, sine labe originali conceptae, harum Provinciarum Patronae, honor aeternus.*

Following upon the definition of the Immaculate Conception there was a marked increase in devotion to Mary under this title, and in Marian devotion in general. Many churches were dedicated to the Immaculate Conception, including today about fifteen Cathedrals; moreover, in almost every city of the United States such beloved titles as "St. Mary's" were chosen for churches, schools, hospitals, and charitable institutions; and Marian sodalities and pious associations multiplied as if by magic.

What so felicitously occurred among the faithful of America after the proclamation of the Immaculate Conception affords grounds for hoping that the same will be repeated now upon the definition of the Assumption, for the same source of inspiration and the same pious devotion relates to both the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption. And it is only natural to expect that the ministers of the altar will play a large part in this. Inspired by sincere zeal they will promote solid piety towards the great Mother of God, imitation of her sublime virtues, and veneration of her as mother, guide, support, and light for youth, for families, for all. The pastoral zeal of the priests has already been rewarded by wide diffusion of devotion to Mary in every part of the country; we behold, for instance, various Marian novenas, Rosary crusades, and the Legion of Mary which has inspired its members to do such splendid work in the field of Catholic Action. Priestly zeal has met with an

enthusiastic response on the part of the faithful, with inestimable benefits for all.

VALUE OF HUMAN LIFE

Mary's Assumption into heaven, when well pondered, leads to the consideration of the value of a human life. Immeasurable indeed is the value of man's life *si Caelestis Patris voluntati exsequendae omnino sit dedita ac ceterorum omnium procurando bono*—in the words of the Sovereign Pontiff, found in the above-mentioned Bull of definition. The theme is a more intensive practice of love of God and love of neighbor. This twofold love, practiced in a Christian sense, inspires men to live as good brothers who recognize God as their common Father. How many times and in how many ways has not America proclaimed universal brotherhood! Her statesmen, men invested with authority, have made appeal after appeal for human brotherhood. And the response of the American people has been magnificent, proving itself in the repeated contributions of funds, food, clothing, and medicines for the needy and suffering of various nations, and for the victims of the misery ensuing upon war. The charity of Christ has wrought this, that charity which engenders understanding and compassion towards the poor. *Beatus qui intelligit super egenum et pauperem* (Psalm 40 : 1).

America is a land blessed by God with abundance—abundance of space, soil, streams, fruits of the earth, and other material goods. Thus has God, from Whom all good things come indicated to this land her mission of assisting the less favored, a mission which in truth she has been fulfilling through the breadth of view, generosity, and munificence that distinguish her people.

Unfortunately, however, the spirit of secularism is pervading the earth, inclining men to exploit material goods for selfish ends. It is the duty of a Christian not to let himself be blinded or led astray by what St. John the Apostle calls "lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and pride of life: which is not from the Father, but from the world. And the world with its lust is

passing away" (1 John 2:16-17). Materialism causes hardness of heart, suffocates virtue, and brings death to the spirit. The sordid failures in human lives that result are reported day after day in the news.

Ours is a Christian civilization, and a Christian civilization affirms the superiority of the spirit over matter. The bodily Assumption of the Virgin should serve to teach us how to spiritualize the tenor of our lives, and to use earthly things for the purpose for which they were given us, namely, to render human life spiritually richer and more abounding.

PRESAGE OF OUR RESURRECTION

God the Creator formed man out of the dust of the earth, and "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life" (Gen. 2:7). It was therefore by God's direct intervention that man was created: his body formed of earth, but his soul infused by God in His own "image and likeness," thus distinguishing man from other creatures. Though the body will dissolve in death, it is nonetheless destined to rise again. Mary's Assumption, the highest glorification given to her virginal body, places vividly before our eyes the dignity of the human body, and affords us a presage of our immortality. Mary's body was the habitation of the Word Who became incarnate in her, and for so lofty a dignity the Mother of God was preserved from every stain of sin. Her two privileges of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption are woven together in her crown of glory. Her Divine Son had reserved for her, "full of grace," all the gifts and charismata possible, and permitted neither sin nor the corruption of the grave to violate that sacred body whence He became flesh.

Vessel of holiness is the body of man. It is made holy by the Sacraments, from Baptism to Extreme Unction, and through being the habitation of the Lord in Eucharistic Communion. The lofty destiny of man's body and soul is manifested to us in the Assumption. Whereas materialism extinguishes virtue and brings the life of man to ruin, our faith, with its vision of the

immortal destiny of our body and soul, sets forth the right concept of life and of the use of worldly goods. Those who wish to serve God faithfully must subordinate the material to the spiritual, and even, so to speak, render spiritual that which is material. Thus we shall proceed higher and higher on the path of virtue, which is that of salvation.

Meditation on the Assumption should effectively revitalize our faith in the resurrection. "I believe in the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting" we affirm in the Apostles' Creed. We shall rise again! "What is sown a natural body rises a spiritual body" (1 Cor. 15 : 44) ; the resurrection of the just will be in glory and power, and will be an *assumption into heaven*. Life on earth is vouchsafed to man that he may have eternal life in heaven, and the body of man is to share in that. How great respect, consequently, is due man's body, destined to find itself in God's sight for eternity! How great reproach do they merit who dishonor the human body by sin, violence, or death! What a solemn pledge should each man make to respect the body's dignity, and so prepare it for eternal glorification! And what consolation should the promise of future glory afford those still languishing in exile, prison, and the misery of persecution! Mary's Assumption into heaven teaches us all this, and the increase of our piety towards the Queen of Heaven so supremely glorified will deepen our understanding of these salutary truths for the good of ourselves and our fellowmen.

Man, in contrast to animals, walks with head erect and eyes gazing towards Heaven—that is the direction in which we must strive. The Assumption of Mary confirms this, and shows us the road we must travel. In an age when strong currents of materialism tend to sweep man towards the fleeting things of earth, Divine Providence has disposed that through the definition of the Assumption by the Reigning Pontiff, Mary our loving Mother come to the aid of her children to impart this sublime teaching. We thank Divine Providence that this definition has occurred in our lifetime, and lifting up our hearts

to Mary we pray: "We invoke thee our Mother, we take thee, as did John, for the guide, the strength, and the consolation of our mortal life."³

✠ A. G. CICOGNANI

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Apostolic Delegate.

*Apostolic Delegation,
Washington, D. C.*

³ From the "Prayer to Mary Most Holy, Assumed into heaven," composed by His Holiness, Pope Pius XII.

THE ASSUMPTION AND THE MODERN WORLD



EVERY defined dogma has two sides: one which looks to clarifying the Tradition which is the living memory of the Mystical Christ; the other which looks to the world and recalls it from its excesses of thought. It is this second aspect alone which interests us presently.

The decision of the Council of the Vatican that human reason can prove the existence of God, was a Christian Rationalism telling a Kantian world that man ought not to give up on the power of the human brain. The definition of the Immaculate Conception was made when the Modern World was born. Within five years of that date, and within six months of the apparition of Lourdes where Mary said, "I am the Immaculate Conception," Darwin wrote his *Origin of the Species*, Karl Marx completed his *Introduction to the Critique of the Philosophy of Hegel*, ("Religion is the opium of the people") and John Stuart Mill published his *Essay on Liberty*. At the moment the spirit of the world was drawing up a philosophy that would issue in two World Wars in twenty-one years and the threat of a third, the Church came forward to challenge the falsity of the new philosophy. Darwin took man's mind off his Divine Origin and fastened it on an unlimited future when he would become a kind of God. Marx was so impressed with this idea of inevitable progress that he asked Darwin if he would accept a dedication of one of his books. Then following Feuerbach, Marx affirmed not a bourgeois atheism of the intellect, but an atheism of the will, in which man hates God because man is God. Mill reduced the freedom of the new man to license and the right to do whatever he pleases, thus preparing a chaos of conflicting egotisms, which the world would solve by Totalitarianism.

If these philosophers were right, and man is naturally good and capable of deification through his own efforts, it follows that every one is immaculately conceived. The Church arose in protest and affirmed that only one human person in all the world is immaculately conceived, that man is prone to sin, and that freedom is best preserved when, like Mary, a creature answers *Fiat* to the Divine Will.

The dogma of the Immaculate Conception wilted and killed the false optimism of the inevitable and necessary progress of man without God. Humbled in his Darwinian-Marxian-Millian pride, modern man saw his doctrine of progress evaporate. The interval between the Napoleonic and Franco-Prussian Wars was fifty-five years; the interval between the Franco-Prussian Wars and the First World War was forty-three years; the interval between the First and Second World Wars, twenty-one years. Fifty-five, forty-three, twenty-one, and a Korean War five years after the Second World War, is hardly progress. Man finally saw that he was not naturally good. Once having boasted that he came from the beast, he now saw himself acting as a beast.

Then came the reaction. The Optimistic Man who boasted of his immaculate conception, now became the Pessimistic Man who could see within himself nothing but a bundle of libidinous, dark, cavernous drives. As in the definition of the Immaculate Conception, the Church had to remind the world that perfection is not biologically inevitable, so now in the definition of the Assumption, it has to give hope to the creature of despair. Modern despair is the effect of a disappointed hedonism and centers principally around Sex and Death. To these two modern ideas, the Assumption is indirectly related.

The primacy of *Sex* is to a great extent due to Freud, whose basic principle in his own words is: "Human actions and customs derive from sexual impulses, and fundamentally, human wishes are unsatisfied sexual desires. . . . Consciously or unconsciously, we all wish to unite with our mothers and kill our fathers, as Oedipus did—unless we are female, in which case we wish to unite with our fathers and murder our mothers."

The other major concern of modern thought is *Death*. The beautiful philosophy of *being* is reduced to *Dasein*, which is only *in-der-Welt-sein*. There is no freedom, no spirit, and no personality. Freedom is for death. Liberty is contingency threatened with complete destruction. The future is nothing but a projection of death. The aim of existence is to look death in the eye.

Sartre passes from a phenomenology of sexuality to that which he calls "nausea," or a brazen confrontation of nothingness toward which existence tends. Nothing precedes man; nothing follows man. Whatever is opposite him is a negation of his ego, and therefore nothingness. God created the world out of nothingness; Sartre creates nothingness out of the world and the despairing human heart. "Man is a useless passion."

Agnosticism and Pride were the twin errors the Church had to meet in the Doctrine of the Immaculate Conception; now it is the despair resulting from Sex and Death it has to meet in this hour. When the Agnostics of the last century came in contact with the world and its three libidos, they became libertines. But when pleasure diminished and made hungry where most it satisfied, the agnostics who had become libertines by attaching themselves to the world, now began in disgust to withdraw themselves from the world and became philosophers of Existentialism. Philosophers like Sartre, and Heidegger, and others are born of a detachment from the world, not as the Christian ascetic, because he loves God, but because they are disgusted with the world. They become contemplatives, not to enjoy God, but to wallow in their despair, to make a philosophy out of it, to be brazen about their boredom, and to make death the center of their destiny. The new contemplatives are in the monasteries of the jaded, which are built not along the waters of Siloe, but along the dark banks of the Styx.

These two basic ideas of modern thought, *Sex* and *Death*, are not unrelated. Freud himself hinted at the union of *Eros* and *Thanatos*. Sex brings death, first of all because in sex the other person is possessed, or annihilated, or ignored for the sake of pleasure. But this subjection implies a compression and a destruction of life for the sake of the *Eros*. Secondly, death is

a shadow which is cast over sex. Sex seeks pleasure, but since it assumes that this life is all, every pleasure is seasoned not only with a diminishing return, but also with the thought that death will end pleasure forever. *Eros* is *Thanatos*.

From a philosophical point of view, the Doctrine of the Assumption meets the Eros-Thanatos philosophy head on, by lifting humanity from the darkness of Sex and Death to the light of Love and Life. These are the two philosophical pillars on which rests the belief in the Assumption.

1. *Love*. The Assumption affirms not Sex but Love. St. Thomas in his inquiry into the effects of love mentions ecstasy as one of them. In ecstasy one is "lifted out of his body," an experience which poets and authors and orators have felt in a mild form when in common parlance, "they were carried away by their subject." On a higher level, the spiritual phenomenon of levitation is due to such an intense love of God that saints are literally lifted off the earth. Love, like fire, burns upward, since it is basically desire. It seeks to become more and more united with the object that is loved. Our sensate experiences are familiar with the earthly law of gravitation which draws material bodies to the earth. But in addition to terrestrial gravitation, there is a law of spiritual gravitation, which increases as we get closer to God. This "pull" on our hearts by the Spirit of God is always present, and it is only our refusing wills and the weakness of our bodies as a result of sin which keep us earth-bound. Some souls become impatient with the restraining body; St. Paul asks to be delivered from its prison house.

If God exerts a gravitational pull on all souls, given the intense love of Our Lord for His Blessed Mother which descended, and the intense love of Mary for Her Lord which ascended, there is created a suspicion that love at this stage would be so great as "to pull the body with it." Given further an immunity from original sin, there would not be in the Body of Our Lady the dichotomy, tension, and opposition that exists in us between body and soul. If the distant moon moves all the

surging tides of earth, then the love of Mary for Jesus and the love of Jesus for Mary should result in such an ecstasy as "to lift her out of this world."

Love in its nature is an Ascension in Christ and an Assumption in Mary. So closely are Love and the Assumption related that a few years ago when the writer was instructing a Chinese lady, he found that the one truth in Christianity which was easiest for her to believe was the Assumption. She personally knew a saintly soul who lived on a mat in the woods, whom thousands of people visited to receive her blessing. One day, according to the belief of all who knew the saint, she was "assumed" into heaven. The explanation the convert from Confucianism gave was: "Her love was so great that her body followed her soul." One thing is certain; the Assumption is easy to understand if one loves God deeply, but it is hard to understand if one loves not.

Plato in his *Symposium*, reflecting the Grecian view of the elevation of love, says that love of the flesh should lead to love of the spirit. The true meaning of love is that it leads to God. Once the earthly love has fulfilled its task, it disappears, as the symbol gives way to reality. The Assumption is not the killing of the Eros, but its transfiguration through Agape. It does not say that love in a body is wrong, but it does hold that it can be so right when it is Godward, that the beauty of the body itself is enhanced.

Our Age of Carnality which loves the Body Beautiful is lifted out of its despair, born of the Electra and Oedipus incests, to a Body that is Beautiful because it is a Temple of God, a Gate through which the Word of Heaven passed to earth, a Tower of Ivory up which climbed Divine Love to kiss upon the lips of His Mother a Mystic Rose. With one stroke of an infallible dogmatic pen, the Church lifts the sacredness of love out of sex without denying the role of the body in love. Here is one body that reflects in its uncounted hues the creative love of God. To a world that worships the body, the Church now says: There are two bodies in heaven, one the glorified human nature of Jesus, the other the assumed human nature of Mary.

Love is the secret of the Ascension of one and of the Assumption of the other, for Love craves unity with its Beloved. The Son returns to the Father in the unity of Divine Nature; and Mary returns to Jesus in the unity of human nature. Her nuptial flight is the event to which our whole generation moves.

2. *Life.* Life is the second philosophical pillar on which the Assumption rests. Life is unitive; death is divisive. Goodness is the food of life, as evil is the food of death. Errant sex impulses are the symbol of the body's division from God as a result of original sin. Death is the last stroke of that division. Wherever there is sin, there is multiplicity: "My name is Legion; there are many of us." (Mark 5:9). But life is immanent activity. The higher the life, the more immanent is the activity, says St. Thomas. The plant drops its fruit from a tree, the animal drops its kind for a separate existence, but the spiritual mind of man begets the fruit of a thought which remains united to the mind, though distinct from it. Hence intelligence and life are intimately related. *Da mihi intellectum et vivam.* God is perfect life because of perfect inner intellectual activity. There is no extrinsicism, no dependence, no necessary outgoing on the part of God.

Since the imperfection of life comes from remoteness to the source of life and because of sin, it follows that the creature who is preserved from original sin is immune from that psychological division which sin begets. The Immaculate Conception guarantees a highly integrated and unified life. The purity of such a life is threefold; a physical purity which is integrity of body, a mental purity which has no desire for a division of love, which love of creatures apart from God would imply, and finally, a psychological purity which is immunity from the uprising of concupiscence, the sign and symbol of our weakness and diversity. This triple purity is the essence of the most highly unified creature this world has ever seen.

Added to this intense life, which is free from the division caused by sin, there is still a higher degree of life because of her Divine Motherhood. Through her portals Eternity became

young and appeared as a Child; through her as to another Moses, not the tables of the Law, but the *Logos* was given and written on her own heart; through her, not a manna which men eat and die, but the Eucharist descends, which if a man eats, he will never die. But if those who commune with the Bread of Life never die, then what shall we say of her who was the first living Ciborium of that Eucharist, and who on Christmas day opened it at the communion rail of Bethlehem to say to Wise Men and Shepherds: "Behold the Lamb of God Who taketh away the sins of the world?"

Here there is not just a life free from the division which brings death, but a life united with Eternal Life. Shall she, as the garden in which grew the lily of divine sinlessness and the red rose of the passion of redemption, be delivered over to the weeds and be forgotten by the Heavenly Gardener? Would not one communion preserved in grace through life insure a heavenly immortality? Then shall not she in whose womb was celebrated the nuptials of eternity and time, be more of eternity than time? As she carried Him for nine months, there was fulfilled in another way the law of life: "And they shall be two in one flesh."

No grown men and women would like to see the home in which they were reared, subjected to the violent destruction of a bomb, even though they no longer lived in it. Neither would Omnipotence, Who tabernacled Himself within Mary, consent to see His fleshy home subjected to the dissolution of the tomb. If grown men love to go back to their homes when they reach the fulness of life, and become more conscious of the debt they owe their mothers, then shall not Divine Life go back in search of His living cradle and take that "flesh-girt paradise" to Heaven with Him, there to be "gardened by the Adam new."

In this Doctrine of the Assumption, the Church meets the despair of the world in a second way. It affirms the beauty of life as against death. When wars, sex, and sin multiply the discords of men, and death threatens on every side, the Church bids us lift up our hearts to the life that has the immortality

of the life which nourished it. Feuerbach said that a man is what he eats. He was more right than he knew. Eat the food of earth, and one dies; eat the Eucharist, and one lives eternally. Be the mother of the Eucharist, and one escapes the decomposition of death.

The Assumption challenges the *nothingness* of the Mortician philosophers in a new way. The greatest task of the spiritual leaders today is to save mankind from despair, into which Sex and Fear of Death have cast it. The world that used to say, "Why worry about the next world, when we live in this one," has finally learned the hard way that by not thinking about the next life, one can not even enjoy this life. When optimism completely breaks down and becomes pessimism, the Church holds forth the promise of hope. Threatened as we are by war on all sides, with death about to be rained from the sky by Promethean fires, the Church defines a Truth that has *Life* at its center. Like a kindly mother whose sons are going off to war, she strokes our heads and says: "You will come back alive, as Mary came back again after walking down the valley of Death." As the world fears defeat by death, the Church sings the defeat of death. Is not this the harbinger of a better world, as the refrain of life rings out amidst the clamors of the philosophers of death?

As Communism teaches man has only a body, but not a soul, the Church answers: "Then let us begin with a Body." As the mystical body of the anti-Christ gathers around the tabernacle doors of the cadaver of Lenin, periodically filled with wax to give the illusion of immortality to those who deny immortality, the Mystical Body of Christ bids the despairing to gaze on the two most serious wounds earth ever received; the empty tomb of Christ and the empty tomb of Mary. In 1854 the Church spoke of the Soul in the Immaculate Conception. Now in 1950 its language is about the Body: The Mystical Body, the Eucharist, and the Assumption. With deft dogmatic strokes the Church is repeating Paul's truth to another pagan age: "Your bodies are meant for the Lord." There is nothing in a body to beget despair. Man is related

to Nothingness, as the Philosophers of Decadentism teach, but only in his origin, not in his destiny. They put Nothingness as the end; the Church puts it at the beginning, for man was created *ex nihilo*. The modern man gets back to nothingness through despair; the Christian knows nothingness only through self-negation, which is humility. The more the pagan "nothings" himself, the closer he gets to the hell of despair and suicide. The more the Christian "nothings" himself, the closer he gets to God. Mary went so much into Nothingness that she became exalted. *Respexit humilitatem ancillae suae*. And her exaltation was her assumption.

Coming back to the beginning. . . . Eros and Thanatos, Sex and Death, said Freud, are related. They are in this sense: *Eros* as egotistic love leads to the death of the soul. But the world need not live under that curse. The Assumption gives *Eros* a new meaning. Love does lead to death. Where there is love, there is self-forgetfulness, and the maximum in self-forgetfulness is the surrender of life. "Greater love than this no man hath, that he lay down his life for his friend." Our Lord's love led to His death. Mary's love led to her transfixion with seven swords. Greater love than this no woman hath, that she stand beneath the cross of her Son to share in her way in the redemption of the world.

Within three decades the definition of the Assumption will cure the pessimism and despair of the modern world. Freud, who did so much to develop this pessimism, took as his motto: "If I can not move the Gods on high, I shall set all hell in an uproar." That which he created will now be stilled by a Lady as powerful as an "army drawn up in battle array." The age of the "body beautiful" will now become the age of the Assumption. To that daughter of the ancient Eve, will now go up the prayer of Thompson;

"The celestial traitress play
And all mankind to bliss betray;
With sacrosanct cajoleries
And starry treachery of your eyes,

Tempt us back to Paradise!
Make heavenly trespass;—ay, press in
Where faint the fledge-foot seraphin,
Blest fool! Be ensign of our wars,
And shame us all to warriors!
Unbanner your bright locks,—advance,
Girl, their gilded puissance
I' the mystic vaward, and draw on
After the lovely gonfalon
Us to out-folly the excess
Of your sweet foolhardiness;
To adventure like intense
Assault against Omnipotence! ”

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THE DOGMATIC DEFINITION OF THE ASSUMPTION



THE following proposition, taught by the Church in both the Fourteenth and Seventeenth General Councils and defined by Benedict XII must be held by faith: "According to God's common ordination the souls of all the Saints who departed this life before the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ and also . . . of the other faithful departed after their reception of Christ's holy baptism, in whom, when they died, there was nothing requiring purification (or) will not be when in the future they shall die—or if there was or shall be in them at the time of death anything requiring purification, when they shall have been purified after death—immediately after their death and the aforesaid purification, they, after the Ascension of the Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ, into heaven, were, are, and shall be in heaven even before the resurrection of their bodies and the general judgment" (Denz. 530).

The Assumption, therefore, of the Blessed Virgin Mary is not to be understood as if it were a question of the glory of her soul alone, for this is common to all the saints: but it is a question of that *singular privilege* of the Mother of God according to which she was assumed into heaven not only as to her soul, but also, like her only-begotten Son, even in body—therefore totally. If Mary did die, then, this privilege includes an anticipated glorious resurrection. I say: if she did die. Historically there is no evidence of that death. There have been, and are, theologians of the opinion that she never died. To this, they say, the universal law of death is not opposed, as the universal law of sin was not opposed to the Immaculate Conception. If Mary was exempted from one law, why not from the other? If this is so, the bodily Assumption of the Blessed Virgin does not include a resurrection but on a certain day fixed by the

wisdom of God she was assumed without the intervention of death.

The Church's opinion in the matter seems opposed to this teaching. According to the ancient and venerable Gregorian Sacramentary, still preserved in the rite of the Order of Preachers, Cistercians, Premonstratensians and others, the prayer of the Church on the feast of the Assumption is:

May this hallowed feast dower us with saving grace, O Lord; since today the Mother of God underwent the death of the body, yet could not be held in death's bonds, as having brought forth thine incarnate Son, etc.

Holy Mother Church through the dogmatic definition of the bodily Assumption of the Mother of God solemnly proposes the Assumption to the faithful as *divinely revealed*: therefore as pertaining to the deposit of faith, and to which we firmly assent without any discussion.

Most naturally then the question arises *when* did God reveal this truth. Divine revelation was definitively ended at the death of the last Apostle: consequently, whatever the Church proposes to us, at any time, as divinely revealed certainly must have been revealed, before that event.

The sources whence the Church can draw these truths are two. The first is *Tradition* by which divine truths "received from the mouth of Christ Himself by the Apostles, or given over as it were, by hand from the Apostles themselves under the dictate of the Holy Ghost, have come down to us" (Denz. 783). The other source is Sacred Scripture in which, under the inspiration of the same Holy Ghost, these truths handed on were, in part, written.

If then the bodily Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary is divinely revealed, it must be found either in Tradition alone, or both in Sacred Scripture and Tradition.

Experts are not in agreement as to whether or not there was, in the first centuries, mention of our Lady's Assumption properly so called. If there was not, that would be disastrous if such an Assumption had to be proved *historically*. But actu-

ally if we consider it merely as an *historical fact* we could never achieve our purpose. For historical facts cannot be demonstrated by *proofs*. They are established by the testimony of witnesses to the fact, or of those who have heard such witnesses. But this is impossible with respect to the bodily Assumption of the Virgin Mother of God, altogether impossible. Consider the Ascension of Our Lord. The historical fact of His Ascension is contained in the written word itself of God, and in the same place eye-witnesses—namely the Apostles—are mentioned. Yet if one questioned the Apostles themselves, and asked them what they had seen, they, on oath, could answer: they had seen that Jesus had left the earth ascending on high, and had not returned. They could add their conviction that Jesus had entered into heaven. But this they had not seen, yet this precisely is the question! The historical fact of our Lord's Ascension cannot be established by qualified witnesses because although they knew the term *whence* (*terminus a quo*) they did not know the term *thence* (*terminus ad quem*): they did not see Jesus received into heaven. The Apostles are not witnesses of our Lord's Ascension considered as an historical fact for this is altogether impossible. They are witnesses of Divine revelation. For, as they were looking up to heaven, Angels appeared and said to them: "Ye men of Galilee why stand you looking up to heaven? This Jesus who is taken up from you into heaven shall so come . . ." (Acts 1, 11). Thus the Apostles are witnesses of a truth divinely revealed which we profess in the Creed.

If Our Lord's Ascension, considered as an historical fact, cannot be established through witnesses, for the very same reason the bodily Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, considered as an historical fact, cannot be established by witnesses either. Without denying the historical character of her Assumption we must place the accent elsewhere. The point is not to attempt to certify *the fact* through evidence, but to adduce *arguments* which prove that the *truth* of this singular *privilege* has been *revealed* by God.

For proving this it is, of course, helpful to have historical

monuments, that is, written evidence of the Fathers and ecclesiastical writers. Most certainly there is such evidence after the first centuries.

Nevertheless, from such evidence of antiquity one would not necessarily have an argument proving that the bodily Assumption of the Virgin is an object of *faith*. For a statement which is *true* is not necessarily *divinely revealed*.

The whole question about the Assumption is not whether it is truly asserted, but whether it is divinely revealed. That it is true has been clear for many centuries. For the universal Church has, for centuries, celebrated the bodily Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary with a special liturgical feast. In this, as in the canonization of Saints, the Church cannot err. If through the infallibility of the Church we know the truth about the consummated sanctity of a Dominic, or a Maria Goretti—namely, that in reality their souls enjoy beatitude in heaven, though this truth is not divinely revealed—likewise, through the same infallibility of the Church we know Mary's glorious Assumption, that in reality the Holy Virgin, soul and body, is in heaven; but from this alone we do not yet know whether it is a divinely revealed truth! Through certitude of this kind the Assumption is not an object of divine faith: neither is the sanctity of Dominic nor of Maria Goretti, yet we assent firmly to this truth because we believe the infallibility of the Church. Should one presume to believe otherwise he would not destroy the virtue of divine faith—for this truth is not an object of divine faith—but he would sin gravely by a sin of pride and temerity. Men of great authority in the Church—for example St. Antoninus, Archbishop of Florence (1459)—who did not consider our Lady's Assumption as a truth revealed by God, taught it nevertheless inasmuch as it was *piously believed by the whole Church*. C. de Vega (1672) wrote: "This is the opinion of the universal Church, the consensus of the doctors and the Fathers, and although there is no express definition of the Church if one should dare think or say otherwise he would not escape at least the note of temerity and error" (Theo. Mor. t. 2: 538).

That the truth of the Blessed Virgin's Assumption be revealed by God it is not necessary, however, that it be found in so many words in the founts of revelation. One truth can be implicit in another and so revealed with it and *in it*. Thus, for example, Sacred Scripture nowhere says in express words that Mary is the Mother of God, yet the Scriptures teach this truth because they teach both that Mary is the Mother of Jesus and that Jesus is a Divine Person. In other words, God can reveal a certain truth to us inasmuch as the truth is *implicit* in some other truth which is explicitly revealed. The privilege of the bodily Assumption of the Holy Virgin has from ancient times been connected with one or another of those privileges which Revelation testifies were given to Mary.

So, from the presupposition that Mary received every effect of grace that other Saints have, at any time, received, St. Bernardine of Siena argues: "If God has revealed the hidden bodies and relics of other Saints as He did in the cases of Saint Stephen, Saints Gervasius and Protasius and many others, as we know from history, would not the Lord have revealed her holy relics, her most sacred body, in order that they be paid due reverence, and honor shown them? This is a sign and an argument that *she did not remain on earth*" (de Assumpt. art. 3, cap. 1). A similar argument is drawn from the ancient opinion that those dead of whom St. Matthew wrote: "and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints that had slept arose" (27, 52), did not die again, but were assumed, bodily, into heaven at the Ascension of the Lord. If they were assumed, so was Mary!

The other reasons which are adduced as testimonies to the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin are not based on a comparison to other Saints and the effects of their graces, but refer rather to prerogatives of the Holy Virgin herself. Regardless of what other Saints have received, there are in the glorious Virgin herself certain divine offices, divinely manifested to us, which seem to demand with more or less certainty the singular privilege of the Assumption. The chief of these reasons are:

- a) because Mary is Mother of God.¹
- b) because her flesh is the flesh of Jesus.²
- c) because she has the principle of Life bodily.³
- d) because she is Virgin.⁴
- e) because she is Immaculate.⁵
- f) because she is the cause of our salvation.⁶
- g) because she is blessed.⁷

No one can be ignorant that the exaltation of the Blessed Virgin Mary to her supreme office, the Divine Maternity, was accomplished in the way demanded by the greatness of the matter. For through this exaltation the holy Virgin entered into the intimate life of the Most Holy Trinity and, note, precisely as the Divine Persons are distinct from one another. With the Son of God Mary contracted a real relation of consanguinity: with the Father, whose Son He is, she contracted another real relation for which we do not have a name but which we call affinity; the real foundation of this relation consists in this—that the same Divine Person is generated by the Father according to His Divinity, by His Mother according to His Humanity, so that one and the same Person is in common to both, Son. Hence Mary is bound by a real relation again

¹ S. Joann. Damasc., MG. 96: 716; S. Bellarminus, conc. 40; Petr. Cel. ML. 202: 850; Savonarola, praed. 18.

² S. Bernardinus Senens. de Assumpt. art. 3, cap. 1; S. Antoninus Flor. S. Th. p. iv, tit. 5; cap. 43 § 3; B. Hildebrand. Tur. ML. 171: 630; Petr. Bles. ML. 207: 664; Suarez, De Incarn., p. ii, disp. 20 sect. 2; Nic. Lyr. Postillae maiores; Lud. Gran. Medit. c. 24; S. Franc. Sales., sermon 15 août 1602; Contenson, Theol. ment. et cord. l. x d. 6 c. 1 a. 3.

³ S. Modest. MG. 86: 3292; S. Andr. Cret. MG. 97: 1080; S. Joann. Dam. *loc. cit.*; S. Germ. Const. MG. 98: 348; Petr. Bles. ML. 207: 662.

⁴ S. Joann. Dam. *loc. cit.*; S. Gregor, Nys. MG. 46: 377; S. Andr. Cret. *loc. cit.*; S. Anselm. ML. 158: 966; Hugo a S. Victore ML. 177: 807; Petr. Bles. *loc. cit.*; S. Bern. Sen. *loc. cit.*; S. Ant. Flor., *loc. cit.*; S. Bellarm., *loc. cit.*

⁵ Petr. Cel. *loc. cit.*; S. Joann. Dam. *loc. cit.*; S. Bern. Sen. *loc. cit.*; S. Bellarm., *loc. cit.*; Theod. Stud. MG. 99: 724; Joann. Maurop. MG. 120: 1098; Suarez, *loc. cit.*

⁶ S. Germ. Const. MG. 98: 345; S. Anselm., *loc. cit.*; Petr. Cel., *loc. cit.*; S. Bern. Sen., *loc. cit.*

⁷ B. Hildebr. Tur. *loc. cit.*; S. Joann. Dam. *loc. cit.*; S. Thom. Aquin. expos. Salut. Angel.

called affinity to the Holy Ghost who proceeds, not from the Father alone, but from the Father and the Son: the Son who was born of the Virgin.

Mary, introduced thus into the intimate life of the three Divine Persons, ought not to be an occasion of any stain on the Divine external glory: yet unworthiness of a mother reflects on a son. The very greatness of the matter demands not only that Mary be free of all unworthiness, but rather that in her there shine forth every human perfection, the consummation of which is had in the beatific vision, through which the supreme human powers, the intellect and will, are completely satisfied. Hence, whatever else be demanded for the worthy elevation of Mary, by which she is rendered fit to be the Mother of God, most assuredly this *ultimate perfection of man* is required. Thus the grace which *first* has its origin in the Divine Maternity, although it is realized *last* in the order of execution, is none other than that by which the throne of the Queen of all Saints is destined for her. In the present order of salvation, the gates of heaven are opened to no one save those whom the Father has predestined "to become conformed to the image of his Son" (Rom. 8: 29). Accordingly, the supreme grade of heavenly beatitude, which befits the Queen of all Saints, by this very fact demands *the closest conformity with the Son of man* who, by despoiling principalities and powers in crushing the head of the ancient serpent, has saved His people from their sins. The Divine Maternity emerges, therefore, as the ultimate reason for all the graces by which Mary has ever been enriched. All these graces serve one end: that she might be a fitting Mother of God. Yet this ultimate reason generates a secondary principle, which is her supreme conformity with Christ. Other graces, although they are ordained ultimately to the worthy elevation of Mary, are nevertheless more directly derived from this conformity of Mary with the triumphant Christ. Hence it is that the relation between any particular grace given to Mary and its ultimate reason, i. e. the Divine Maternity, is not always clear to us, while, on the contrary,

the relation between such a grace and the conformity of Mary with Christ does not escape us. Such then is the present case. Although the Divine Maternity is the ultimate reason for the bodily Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, still from the mere knowledge of this Maternity we do not seem to be able to attain to certitude in regard to her Assumption. In other words, if the Assumption is known to us in some other way, then the proposition: "She was assumed because she is the Mother of God," is absolutely true. If, however, the Divine Maternity alone be known to us, then we cannot assert with certitude that Mary was assumed. For the necessary relation is hidden from us, since it depends entirely on the free will of God. Consequently, the first three reasons, which are easily reduced to one, cannot prove that Mary was assumed, still less that the Assumption is a truth implied in the revealed truth of the Divine Maternity.

The two following reasons are much more forceful. For the curse which God placed on the human race in the day of His wrath is extended to the pain of childbirth. "In sorrow shalt thou bring forth children" (Gen. 3: 16). It is a revealed truth, however, that Mary remained a virgin even in giving birth. Hence the formality of sorrow has been removed. Although immunity from such sorrow does not demand virginity—if man had not sinned, God would have provided differently—nevertheless virginity in child-birth *per se* causes such an immunity. Just as the sin of man in paradise is one, though having many aspects (disobedience, pride, seduction, infidelity), so the curse is only one, but having many aspects. Since, therefore, by reason of her virginity in giving birth, Mary was immune from the pain of child-birth, we can legitimately conclude: If one aspect of the curse is not present, then the whole curse is absent. If Mary is thus immune from the pain of child-birth, then she is similarly free from the return to dust. Mary therefore was assumed because she remained a virgin in child-birth.

We must speak in a like manner about the fifth reason. Here

too, we can reason legitimately and conclude to the Assumption. Although the ecclesiastical definition considers only Mary's conception itself, by which she is immaculate, nevertheless, putting our confidence in divine tradition, we should heed the declaration of the Church in the nineteenth ecumenical council—that of Trent—that Mary received the singular privilege whereby she avoided altogether all sins, venial sins included. If this is certain, then it is likewise manifest that she was not weighed down with the penalty of returning to dust: for God punishes no one except on account of sin. Let us listen to the divine indignation: "What is the meaning that you use among you this parable as a proverb in the land of Israel, saying: The fathers have eaten sour grapes and the teeth of the children are set on edge? As I live, saith the Lord God, this parable shall be no more to you a proverb in Israel. Behold all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, the same shall die" (Ezech. 18: 2-4). If in Mary there is absolutely no sin, then neither shall there be punishment. She is assumed then because she is immaculate. These two reasons truly represent scientific reasoning processes, hence by their force the Assumption is rendered theologically certain. However, whether by force of these reasons it is declared definable as a theological conclusion, which I would not venture to admit, depends on the opinion of the one who might so maintain.

There remain now the two final reasons which are completely valid, just as they are in the question of that other singular privilege of Mary, her Immaculate Conception. Pius IX in 1854 defined this wonderful dogma, and in the dogmatic bull *Ineffabilis Deus* he indicated, at the request of the bishops, the sources of divine revelation whence he drew the divine revelation of this privilege. First he appealed to a divinely revealed truth that Mary was constituted by God as an associate of her only begotten Son in the complete triumph which He wrought over Satan and his seed. Since, therefore, this special participation in Christ's triumph over the devil cannot be conceived if

we exclude the two privileges of the Immaculate Conception and the bodily Assumption, we must conclude that in the revelation of this loving association with Jesus there is *implied* both that Mary was conceived immaculate and that she was assumed bodily into heaven.

For no matter how many victories the devil has had over us in the past, nevertheless the *final* victory on our part always remains possible. Those of us who are predestined will *finally* triumph over Satan in the strength of Christ, having been made partakers of the triumph of Jesus Himself. This final victory of ours must never be spoken of as *full*, since the victories of Satan over us have been so many and so great. Overcome by the devil we are conceived "by nature sons of wrath" (Eph. 2: 3), "we have exceedingly sinned" (Esdr. 1, 10: 13), we live "in tribulations, in hardships, in distresses" (11 Cor. 6: 4), and finally "into dust we shall return" (Gen. 3: 19), and "we are saved yet as by fire" (1 Cor. 3: 15), only "at the last trumpet shall we the dead rise again" (1 Cor. 15: 52), and then finally, "we shall see God as he is" (1 John 3: 2). The *final*, but *not the full* victory will be ours, for how many and how varied have been Satan's victories over us! And yet, as St. Thomas teaches: "The most perfect and sublime kind of victory is never to have given way to the enemy" (IV Sent. d. 49, q. 5, a. 3, qula. 1, ad 1um.)

Therefore, if she is the partaker of Christ, His loving associate in His fullest triumph over Satan, Mary *can never have been overcome by the devil in any way*. Whatever can in any manner be construed as a victory of the devil must be entirely excluded from the Virgin Mother of God. This is to be understood not only of sin, but also of all punishment inflicted on its account. It is written, "For God made not death. . . . But by the envy of the devil, death came into the world" (Wisdom 1: 13 and 2: 24). Moved by this hatred against God punishing him, and his envy towards men whom God called to beatitude in place of the devils, Satan truly *intended* both the sin of man (so that the new friend of God might become His

enemy), as well as the punishment inflicted on account of sin (so that man too might fall away from the blessedness destined for him). Hence we who are liable to sin and, therefore, its punishments, have been overcome by the devil in various ways. If, on the other hand, it be a divinely revealed truth that Mary was established as the associate of Christ in His most complete triumph, then neither sin nor its punishment can have any place in her. As Pius IX states: "*The Fathers and writers of the Church, taught by the heavenly writings . . . when quoting the words by which at the beginning of the world the Almighty announced His merciful remedies for the renewal of mankind, and by which He crushed the audacity of the deceitful serpent and wonderfully raised up the hope of the race, "I will put enmities between thee and the woman, between thy seed and her seed" (Gen. 3: 15),—when quoting these words, they taught that by this divine oracle the merciful Redeemer of the human race, the Only-begotten Son of God, Jesus Christ, was clearly and openly pointed out beforehand, that His Most Blessed Mother, the Virgin Mary, was designated, and that at the same time the very enmity of both against the devil was signally expressed. Hence, just as Christ, the Mediator between God and man, assumed human nature, blotted out the handwriting of the decree that stood against us, and fastened it triumphantly to the Cross, so the Most Holy Virgin, united with Him and through Him, eternally at enmity with that poisonous Serpent, and most completely triumphed over him, and thus crushed his head with her immaculate foot" (Ineffabilis Deus).*

The Sovereign Pontiff, therefore, the infallible interpreter of divine revelation, teaches that the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin has been divinely revealed and indeed in this divine oracle itself, because in it, according to the pronouncements of the witnesses of divine tradition, lies the revelation of the association of the most holy Mother of God with her only-begotten Son in eternal enmity against the devil, and consequently her association in the fullest triumph of Jesus.

If, therefore, the basis of the Immaculate Conception is the same as the basis of the Assumption of Mary into heaven, namely her most perfect conformity with Christ Jesus, then it should be clear to everyone why the Fathers of the twentieth ecumenical council—the Vatican Council—imploring the dogmatic definition of the Assumption, have themselves appealed to this divine oracle: “ Since, according to *apostolic teaching* (Rom. 5: 8; 1 Cor. 15: 24, 26, 54, 57, Hebr. 2: 14-15 and other places), that triumph which Christ wrought over Satan, the serpent of antiquity, was constituted by the *three-fold victory* over sin and the fruits of sin, which are *concupiscence* and *death*, its integral parts; and since according to Genesis (3: 15) the Mother of God is shown as associated in a *singular* manner with her Son in this triumph; according to the unanimous vote of the Holy Fathers, *we do not doubt that in the aforesaid oracle the same Blessed Virgin is shown as sharing in that three-fold victory*; and therefore *in the same place it was foretold* that she would be made victress over *sin* through her Immaculate Conception, over *concupiscence* through her virginal maternity, and also over *death* through her accelerated resurrection in the likeness of her Son ” (Vatican Council, Collected Documents) .

The argumentation of the Venerable Fathers of the Council is as simple as it is stringent. From the very written word of God we learn that the great triumph of Christ Jesus was made up of a three-fold victory, the victory over sin, over concupiscence and over death which are the fruits of sin. According to the teaching of Pius IX in defining the Immaculate Conception—a teaching which he gives in immediate connection with the definition itself and which he asserts is found in tradition—Mary is foretold as the Associate of Christ in His triumph. Sin, concupiscence, and death, therefore, must not be spoken of in relation to the Blessed Virgin, if we do not wish to contradict that divine oracle. Just as the Immaculate Conception and the perpetual virginity of Mary are divinely revealed as *integral parts* of that triumph, so in the same way there is implied the bodily Assumption of the same Blessed

Virgin. If we assent to the truth of the Immaculate Conception and the perpetual virginity of Mary, which are revealed there implicitly, we must similarly give our firm assent to the truth of her bodily Assumption *as a truth divinely revealed*, as soon as Holy Mother Church proposes it to us, either through her ordinary magisterium or through a solemn definition of the Holy Father. The truth of the Assumption which, after the death of the last Apostle, was realized historically as a singular privilege of the Mother of God, was divinely revealed to us by God, in his first declaration to men after the fall of Adam. Take away the Assumption, and the association with Jesus to which Mary was called becomes completely unintelligible and ceases to exist.

Pius IX in defining the Immaculate Conception has not only cited the famous text in the proto-evangelium, but also the Gospel according to St. Luke (1: 28, and 42). The salutations of the Angel Gabriel and Elizabeth must be understood as implying the privilege of the Immaculate Conception. In the words of the Holy Father: "*When the Fathers and Writers of the Church reflected in their hearts and minds that the Most Blessed Virgin was, in the name and by the order of God Himself, proclaimed 'full of grace' by the Angel Gabriel when he announced her most sublime dignity of Mother of God (Luke 1: 28), they taught that this singular and solemn salutation which had never been heard elsewhere shows that the Mother of God is the seat of all divine graces and is adorned with all the gifts of the Holy Spirit; why, she is almost an infinite treasury, an inexhaustible abyss of these gifts, to such an extent that she was never subject to the curse and is together with her Son the only partaker of perpetual benediction. So she deserved to hear from Elizabeth, inspired by the Holy Spirit, 'Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb' "*" (*Ineffabilis Deus*).

If the plentitude of the graces and charisms granted to Mary must be understood in the sense that Mary was never subject to the curse but was on the contrary, a partaker of perpetual

benediction, this plenitude is completely *unintelligible* and meaningless, unless it includes immunity from *every* curse which an angry God laid upon the human race. We must consequently include the immunity from this curse spoken of in Genesis: "Thou shalt return to the earth out of which thou wast taken: for dust thou art, and into dust thou shalt return" (3: 19). Just as under the revelation and ordination of God, Mary, the Mother of God and His associate, is exempted from the universal law of sin, likewise under the divine plan she was freed from the universal law of punishment inflicted on account of sin.

The force of this argument, just as that of the previous one, is insuperable. Neither argument is based upon reasoning (*ratiocinatio*) properly so called, by which we *conclude* from a revealed truth to a new truth thus far unknown which is, however, *virtually* implied there and explicated by us by means of a human power, viz. theological science. The theological conclusion always labors under the weakness of human frailty, since according to the laws of logic the conclusion to some extent always follows the weaker part. Such is not the case here. For here it is a question of a particular truth which, although not proposed in explicit formal words, is nevertheless implied *in other words that are divinely revealed*. Hence it does not need reasoning (*ratiocinatio*), but unfolding only. In other words, a truth revealed by God is not employed as a premise in a syllogism so that by means of another premise a conclusion might be drawn from it, but in the revealed truth itself there is implied this other truth.

It is evident from divine revelation (Gen. 3: 19) that decomposition of the human body is a curse of God. If, therefore, it has been divinely revealed that Mary was in no way subject to the curse, then neither was she subject to this aspect of it. It is similarly clear from divine revelation (Wisdom 2: 24) that the decomposition of the human body is a victory of the devil. If then it is revealed that the devil won no victory over Mary, then neither did he win this one. There is consequently

a great difference between these two reasons which the Fathers set forth and the two preceding ones: She was assumed because she is a virgin, and because she is immaculate. These latter represent true reasoning processes which lead to a theological conclusion. The three preceding ones do not lead us to this conclusion but to a certain fittingness which they, with more or less force, indicate. Given the divine revelation of the Assumption, these first three reasons explain the fittingness of this disposition and nothing more. The two arguments leading to a theological conclusion make us scientifically certain of the Assumption, just as we are made certain of it through the universal celebration of the liturgical feast of the Assumption. The last two reasons do not primarily teach us of the certitude of the Assumption itself, but they do show that the bodily Assumption of the Holy Mother of God *has truly been revealed by God*, which is a much greater thing. According, nothing else is required that we believe this truth with the assent of divine faith than that the Church proposes it to us as revealed.

It might be asked, however, whether through such arguments too much, and hence nothing at all, is proved. For it does not seem clear why, in the cited texts of Sacred Scripture which the Supreme Pontiff has interpreted, the victory of the devil and the divine curse are restricted to decomposition alone, and are not extended to the separation of body and soul, that is to *death* properly so called. The threat of God reads: "For in what day soever thou shalt eat of it, thou shalt die the *death*" (Gen. 2: 17). Hence, as we have noted previously, there have been, and are, theologians who hold that Mary did not die and consequently that her glorious Assumption did not include an anticipated resurrection.

The reasons we have given do not seem to offer a foundation for this position however. Just as deep calleth unto deep, so does this question give rise to another, since we can immediately ask: If immunity from every victory of the devil and from every divine malediction should exclude *death* itself in Mary, what then is to be said of the divine Savior, who suf-

fered and died? Was he overcome by Satan? Cursed by the Father? This question then points out the solution to our problem. For Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ had a body which "according to its own natural condition was subject to necessity in regard to the nail that pierced and the scourge that struck" (*Summa Theo.* III, q. 14, a. 2). Christ did not *contract* these defects, however. "For He received human nature without sin, in the purity which it had in the state of innocence. In the same way He might have assumed human nature without defects" (*ibid.*, a. 3). In other words, Christ assumed human nature in a manner convenient to the end of the Incarnation. *Propter nos et propter nostram salutem descendit de coelis*, as the Creed has it. Thus, "it was in order to satisfy for the sin of the human race that the Son of God, having taken flesh, came into the world. Now one satisfies for another's sin by taking on himself the punishment due to the sin of the other. . . . Hence it was useful for the end of the incarnation that He should assume these penalties in our flesh and in our stead, according to Isaiah 53, 4, *Surely He hath borne our infirmities*" (*ibid.*, a. 1). Jesus then is truly the victor over the devil, but He effected that victory in a way befitting the end of the Incarnation: *by way of satisfaction* offered to God for us. He took unto Himself that part of our punishment by which it was possible for Him to offer the required satisfaction to God, but through which His triumph over Satan would not be imperilled. He underwent His Passion and Death, hunger, thirst, and weariness, but not decomposition. For if "His body had corrupted or dissolved, this fact would have been detrimental to man's salvation, since it would not have seemed credible that the divine power was in Him. Hence it is said of His Person: *What profit is there in my blood, whilst I go down to corruption?* as if he were to say: *If My body should corrupt, the profit of the shedding of My Blood will be lost*" (*Summa Theo.*, III, q. 51, a. 3, ad 1). Through the putrefaction of His body, therefore, His victory over the devil would have been obliterated. Consequently, *He was hungry* (Matt. 4: 2), *He thirsted* (John

19: 28), *He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried* (Apost. Creed), but before the corruption of death could begin, He returned to life, since it is written: "Nor wilt thou give thy holy one to see corruption" (Ps. 15: 10).

Our Lord and Savior triumphed in a true and full sense over *sin*, which He as Lamb of God through His Passion and Death took from the world; and *over death*, which He overcame through His glorious resurrection; and, finally, *over Satan*, whom He conquered by liberating us from sin and its punishment.

If, therefore, the Virgin Mother of God was appointed the loving associate of Christ in His fullest triumph, then she must participate in those things which lead to that triumph. Hence she too has been hungry, thirsty, and weary. She was very poor as we know from the Gospel of St. Luke (2: 24) and Leviticus (12: 8). She stood by the cross of Jesus and "just as she suffered and almost died with her suffering and dying Son, so she foreswore her maternal rights to her Son and immolated Him, in so far as it belonged to her, to placate the divine justice. Thus it can be truly said that with Christ she redeemed the human race" (Benedict XV, *Inter Sodalicia*). The victory of Mary then implies immunity from putrefaction or the corruption of death. She who brought forth the incarnate Son of God could not be held in the bonds of death. This does not imply in any way that the Virgin was freed from death itself. She shared in the redemptive Passion of Jesus Christ and "was partner with Him in the arduous expiation made for the human race, . . . spiritually dying with Him while her heart was pierced with a sword of sorrow" (Leo XIII, *Jucunda semper*). She herself, clearly alluding to the words of Isaias, who usually designates the Messiah as the *servant of the Lord* suffering for His people, calls herself *the handmaid of the Lord* (Luke 1: 38). It would be to the detriment of human salvation if the body of the loving associate of Christ, which was made a sharer of so great a triumph, should have corrupted or returned to dust, since there would be grounds for a lack of

belief that the divine power operated in her. The conformity of Mary with the image of her Son, necessary in her to the highest degree by reason of the most sublime heavenly perfection which befits the Mother of God, demands immunity from the corruption of death, but not from death itself. Quite the contrary, this conformity precisely demands that she, like her only begotten Son, should undergo death on a day appointed by God, so that in the likeness of her Son, she might be granted the glorious privilege of an anticipated resurrection. Just as her Son "was taken up from us into heaven," so she also has been raised bodily above the skies to the heavenly kingdom.

Thus it is that the Assumption of the Most Blessed Virgin, the beloved associate of her triumphant Son, does not primarily refer to her but rather to Jesus. For the work of our salvation has not yet ended, but goes on and is perfected from day to day until the last of those who are to be saved is assumed bodily into heaven. Mary's Assumption crowns the work of salvation, since it shows that the salvific work of Christ is now absolute and perfect in at least one person—in her who alone obtained a greater grace than all others and whom, therefore, Christ's redemptive work regards, more than it does all the rest of the elect, taken together. She has indeed triumphed with Jesus over the ancient serpent, but she has effected this victory only *through Him*. Hence Jesus, the Savior of all men, is in the sublimest way imaginable the Saviour of His Mother and His associate, the ever glorious Virgin Mary. The perfect salvation of Mary assumed bodily into heaven is one of the great glories of the Son of man.

Behold! She who stood by the cross of Jesus dying with Him, her heart pierced by a sword of sorrow, now stands as Queen at His right hand, so that again with Him and through Him, she might lead the redeemed people to their goal; She together with Him liveth and reigneth, Queen of all Saints, world without end.

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THE ASSUMPTION AND THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION



AMONG the various arguments adduced by theologians to prove the bodily Assumption of the Mother of God and its definability, the argument taken from the Immaculate Conception seems to hold the principal place. All theologians willingly concede the existence of an impressive fittingness between the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption. Not all, however, concede that there is such a necessary connection between these two mysteries that the Assumption proceeds from the Immaculate Conception as an effect from a cause. Yet upon reflection, to deny such a necessary connection seems impossible.

If carefully studied, this entire problem is seen to depend on the connection, in the present order, between original sin and death. Concerning this fundamental question, we may distinguish two extreme opinions and three opinions which may be called quasi-means between the two extremes.

The two extreme opinions are: 1) Death and subsequent bodily corruption, whether in Adam or his descendants, have no connection with sin; they are not a punishment of sin, but are always and only natural events: this is the opinion of the Pelagians; 2) Death and subsequent bodily corruption in Adam and his descendants are always and only (even in an order diverse from the present) a penalty of sin with which, therefore, it is necessarily connected: thus speak the followers of Baius. Both of these mutually contradictory opinions have been condemned by the Church. Consequently, Catholics unanimously profess that Adam's death and bodily corruption were the penalty of sin. Among Catholics, therefore, the question concerns only the descendants of Adam.

With regard to this question there are three opinions which

mediate between the condemned extremes. These are: 1) Death and the consequent bodily corruption of the descendants of Adam are, in the present order of things, the punishment for sin, and a natural occurrence only in another possible order diverse from the present; 2) death, if signifying merely the separation of the soul from the body without the subsequent corporeal corruption, is not the punishment for the sin committed by Adam; 3) death or the subsequent decay of the body, considered separately, are in all the descendants of Adam, even in the present order, either merely the condition of human nature or consequent solely upon the sin of Adam (i. e. original sin *originantis*, not, however, original sin *originati* or, in other words, personally contracted).

This triple opinion concerning the connection between sin and death gives rise to three opinions concerning the connection between the Immaculate Conception (or immunity from fault) and the Assumption (or immunity from punishment, i. e., from the dominion of death). The adherents of the first opinion maintain that the Blessed Virgin, by the fact that she had a right to immortality was not subject to death and should not have died. If, *de facto*, she did die, it was, as in the case of Christ, for the co-redemption of the human race. Consequently the Blessed Virgin, like her Son, ought to have risen from death. This first opinion, therefore, postulates a necessary connection between the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption. The followers of the second opinion claim that the Blessed Virgin, although subject to death, nevertheless should not have been subjected to the corruption and dominion of death (which is, according to them, the true punishment of sin). Even this opinion retains the necessary connection between the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption. Those who hold the third opinion deny any connection between the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption since they deny any connection either between sin and death or between sin and subsequent corruption.

We adhere to the first opinion which postulates a necessary connection between the Immaculate Conception and the As-

sumption. To prove effectively this position we here propose three considerations, namely: (1) a history of this proposition throughout the centuries; (2) the apodictic theological value of this proposition; and (3) the refutation of the principal objections brought against the proposition.

The history of the proposition in favor of the Assumption as deduced from the Immaculate Conception may be divided into four periods, namely: (1) the Patristic Period (the first eight centuries); (2) the Medieval Period (from the ninth to the sixteenth century); (3) the Modern Period (from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century); and (4) the Contemporary Period (the nineteenth and twentieth centuries).

From the 5th and 6th centuries on, the Fathers began to perceive the connection between the Immaculate Conception and death, or between immunity from original sin (the achievement of the Immaculate Conception) and immunity from punishment (the accomplishment of corporeal Assumption).¹ Apparently the first who sufficiently perceived this connection was St. Germanus of Constantinople († 733), for he clearly saw that the cause of the death of the Blessed Virgin was not original sin but her task of Coredemptrix. In other words the Blessed Virgin, like her Son, died to give life to men.² Since she liberated men from the opprobrium of Eve (which included death and corruption) the Mother of God gloriously rose from the dead and was assumed into heaven.³ The author of the homily, *In depositionem pretiosae et praesanctae Dei Genitricis Dominae Nostrae*, more or less asserts the same. Because the Blessed Virgin was beyond all and any sin, God led her from death to life.⁴ In yet clearer words, St. Andrew of Crete⁵ († 740) and St. John Damascene⁶ (674-749) express the same idea.

¹ Cf. A. Dufourcq, *Comment s'éveilla la foi à l'Immaculée Conception et à l'Assomption aux V^e et VI^e siècles*. Paris, 1946.

² P. G. 98, 345C.

³ *Ibid.*, 449.

⁴ C. Combefis, *Auctarium Novum Bibliothecae Patrum*, t. II, col. 791 D. E. Paris, 1648.

⁵ "Homil. in Dormit.", P. G. 120, 1089C; 1092D; 1053A; 1025C; 1100B; 1101C; 1097B; 1093A.

⁶ "Homil. in Dormit.", P. G. 96, 103D; 725D; 760D; 728B; 709C; 725A; 728ABC.

For Pseudo-Augustine (9th cent.) the Blessed Virgin's immunity from the curse of Eve is the reason for her immunity from bodily corruption after death.⁷ Theognostus The Monk (9th cent.) deduces a holy end (i. e. the holy conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary).⁸ Likewise, John of Euchaita deduces the Assumption from the Immaculate Conception.⁹ A similar proposition is offered by Walter of St. Victor († 1192),¹⁰ Pierre de Celle († 1191),¹¹ Jean Phurnès (12th cent.),¹² St. Amadeus of Lausanne († 1159),¹³ Peter of Blois († 1120),¹⁴ etc. All those who denied the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin, such as Bartholomew of Bologna,¹⁵ St. Albert the Great,¹⁶ St. Bonaventure,¹⁷ St. Thomas,¹⁸ etc. freely admit a necessary nexus between original sin and death.

From the twelfth to the fifteenth century, while the controversy over the Immaculate Conception grew stronger, the proponents of this doctrine frequently drew upon the Assumption to bolster their proposition. In other words, from material incorruption (the work of the Assumption) they argued *a fortiori* to spiritual incorruption. These theologians included such men as Lawrence Opimo, O. S. M.,¹⁹ Bartholomew of Pisa,²⁰

⁷ "Serm. de Assumpt. B. M. V.", cc. 3-4, P. L. 40, 1144s.

⁸ Cod. 763 *fundī graeci* Bibl. Nat. Paris. f. 8. V.

⁹ Cf. N. Marini, *L'Immacolata Concezione di Maria V. e la Chiesa Greca ortodossa dissidente*, p. 148. Rome, 1908.

¹⁰ *Excerpta ex libris contra IV labrintos Franciae*, L. III, P. L. 199, 1155s.

¹¹ Serm. 67, "De Assumpt. B. V. M.", serm. 2, P. L. 202, 850.

¹² Cf. *Homiliae Theophani Kérameus*, ed. I. Palamas, p. 272. Jerusalem, 1860.

¹³ "De B. Virginis obitu, assumptione in coelum, exaltatione ad Filii dexteram," homil. 7, P. L. 188, 1337.

¹⁴ Serm. 34: "In eadem Assumpt.," P. L. 207, 664.

¹⁵ "Quaestiones de corporali B. M. Virginis Assumptione," q. 1, resp., ed. A. Deneffe, in Coll. *Opuscula et textus historiam Ecclesiae eiusque vitam atque doctrinam illustrantia*, Series Scholastica, fasc. 9, 30-32. Münster, 1930.

¹⁶ *Mariale*, Op. omn., XXXVII, 186, ed. Vives.

¹⁷ *In III Sent.*, d. 15, q. 3, ad 3. Op. III, 78b.

¹⁸ *Summa Theol.* III, q. 27, a. 3, ad 1.

¹⁹ Cf. C. Piana, O. F. M., "Contributo allo studio della theologia e della leggenda dell'Assunzione della Vergine nel sec. XIV," in *Studi Francescani*, ser. 3, 16 (1944) 102ss.

²⁰ *De vita et laudibus B. M. V.*, Lib. I, fructus 7 (p. 121s.).

André de Neufchateau,²¹ Peter Aureolus,²² Peter Thomas,²³ Dominic Leoni,²⁴ Michael Aiguani,²⁵ Walter de Catton,²⁶ Alaphridus Gouteri,²⁷ Francis Marti,²⁸ Thomas Rossi,²⁹ Kilianus Stetzing,³⁰ Gilles Charlier,³¹ Bernardine de Busti,³² Alexander de Riciis,³³ Louis a Turri de Verona,³⁴ etc. The opponents of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception never dared to deny the necessary connection between the Assumption and the Immaculate Conception, and so, to deny the Immaculate Conception relied on other arguments.³⁵

The fact that the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption are conjoined is explicitly stated by Stephen Brulefer († before 1500),³⁶ Ambrosius Catarinus († 1553),³⁷ Cyril Lucaris († 1638),³⁸ Angelus Vulpes, O. F. M. Conv. († 1647),³⁹ Aloysius Crespi y Boria († 1663),⁴⁰ Franciscus Guerra, O. F. M.,⁴¹ Franc. Thomas de Urrutigoiti, O. F. M., etc.⁴² From the fifteenth to the eighteenth century the same position was maintained by

²¹ *Quaestio*, fol. 119v.

²² *Quaestiones disputatae*, 58ss.

²³ *Liber de innocentia V. Mariae*, lib. II, pars 5, c. (p. 248s).

²⁴ Cf. Piana, *loc. cit.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *In III Sent.*, d. 3, *De Schola Franciscana Erfordiensis*, 89. Ed. L. Meier.

³¹ Cf. V. Doucet, O. F. M., "Mag. Aegidius Carlieri († 1472) eiusque quaestio de immac. concept. B. V. M.," in *Antonianum*, 5 (1930) 427.

³² *Mariale*, pars. 1, serm. 6, pars. 3 (fol. 27vb).

³³ *Mariale*, fol. 60rb.

³⁴ *Tractatus de conceptione B. V. M.*, Prol. (ed. Alva et Astorga, *Monumenta antiqua seraphica*, 329a.).

³⁵ Cf. Piana, *loc. cit.*

³⁶ *In quattuor divi seraphique Bonaventurae Sententiarum libros interpretatio subtilissima*, s. fol. Venice, 1504.

³⁷ *Disputatio pro immaculata B. V. conceptione*, L. III, p. 120. Lyons, 1542.

³⁸ Cf. E. J. Kimmel, *Monumenta fidei Ecclesiae Orientalis*, t. 1, pp. 355ss. Jena, 1850.

³⁹ *Sacrae Theologiae Summa Ioannis Duns Scoti doctoris subtilissimi commentaria*, t. III, p. IV, pp. 491, 503-506. Naples, 1646.

⁴⁰ *Propugnaculum theologicum definibilitatis proximae sententiae piae negantis beatum Virginem in primo suae conceptionis instanti originalis labe fuisse infectam*, p. 93, n. 121. Valencia, 1653.

⁴¹ *Maestas gratiarum et virtutum omnium Deiparae V. M.*, t. I, lib. 2, tract. 1, c. 4, fragm. 3, n. 10, p. 167s. Seville, 1659.

⁴² *Certamen scholasticum pro Deipara*, t. I, disp. 1, sect. 1, n. 2, p. 3; sect. 33, n. 309ss, pp. 211ss. Lyons, 1675.

such celebrated Spanish theologians as Salmeron, Suarez, Boeza, Quiroga, Carolus del Moral, Siuri, etc.⁴³

In our own time, the necessary connection between these two privileges of the Blessed Virgin has been brought into sharper focus by the dogmatic definition of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. In 1849, Cardinal Sterkx, Archbishop of Malines and His Excellency, Bishop Sanchez of Osma, replying to the letter of Pope Pius IX, asked for a definition of the Assumption along with the dogmatic definition of the Immaculate Conception since these two truths were necessarily interrelated.⁴⁴ This necessary connection between the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption is openly expressed in the Postulation for the definition of the Assumption (Feb. 23, 1870), signed by 187 Fathers of the Vatican Council.⁴⁵ Pope Pius IX, himself in answering postulatory letters of Queen Isabella of Spain, placed a necessary connection between the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin, and her Assumption into heaven.⁴⁶ By the year 1942, the Holy See had received 171 petitions reiterating the identical proposition.⁴⁷ The connection of these two prerogatives of Mary has been clarified by many theologians, among whom the following are preeminent: Carlo Passaglia,⁴⁸ Domenico Arnaldi,⁴⁹ A. M. Ianucci,⁵⁰ A. Lana,⁵¹ L. Janssens,⁵² J. B. Terrien,⁵³ I. Augustí Panella,⁵⁴ and M. Jugie.⁵⁵

⁴³ Cf. "La Asunción en la Teología Española," in *Estudios Marianos*, 7 (1947), 373.

⁴⁴ Cf. Hentrich-De Moos, *Petitiones* . . . , t. II, p. 1056.

⁴⁵ Cf. Martinus Ep. Paderbonensis, *Omnium Concilii Vaticani, quae ad doctrinam et disciplinam pertinent, documentorum Collectio*, p. 114.

⁴⁶ Cf. Hentrich-De Moos, *op. cit.*, 11, 576. The words of the Pontiff: "Non vi è dubbio ne l'Assunzione nella maniera con la quale è creduta dalla comune dei Fedeli, è una conseguenza, del dogma della sua Concezione immacolata."

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 739.

⁴⁸ *De Immaculato Deiparae semper Virginis conceptu Commentationes*, p. III, sect. 6. Naples, 1855.

⁴⁹ Cf. G. Ameri, O. F. M., "La Dottrina di Domenico Arnaldi sull' Assunzione della B. V. M.," in *Marianum*, 12 (1950), 56-87.

⁵⁰ *Firmitudo catholicae veritatis de psychosomatica Deip. Assumptione*, p. 201-204. Turin, 1884.

⁵¹ *La resurrezione corporea e Assunzione al cielo della Santa Vergine Madre di Dio*, p. 182. Rome, 1880.

⁵² *Summa Theol.*, t. V, Tr. De Deo-Homine, p. 11, q. 58, App.

Likewise, the following theologians profess a necessary connection between the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption: Mueller, S. J.,⁵⁶ Bover, S. J.,⁵⁷ A. Luis, C. SS. R.,⁵⁸ Friethoff, O. P.,⁵⁹ Crisostomo de Pamplona, O. F. M. Cap.,⁶⁰ De Aldama, S. J.,⁶¹ Bernardine Lago, O. F. M.,⁶² H. Jaussens,⁶³ *Supplex libellus* requesting a dogmatic definition presented to Pope Pius XII by the Theological and Philosophical Faculties of the College of Barcelona of the Jesuit Province of Aragon (Barcelona 1946, p. 27), Pacifico Perantoni, O. F. M., Minister Gen.,⁶⁴ José Ibañez Martín, Minister of Spain, in the *Voto pro Assumptione* signed by 20 members of the Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas and sent to the Holy See,⁶⁵ O. Pessini, C. M. F.,⁶⁶ G. Gallus, S. J.,⁶⁷ P. E. Longpré, O. F. M.,⁶⁸ etc.

The theological value of the argument in favor of the Assumption based on the Immaculate Conception depends entirely on the necessary connection, in the present order of things, between original sin and death. But is there really such a

⁵³ *La mère de Dieu*, t. II, p. 396ss. Paris, ed. 6.

⁵⁴ *La Virgen en el misterio de la Asunción*. Madrid, 1931.

⁵⁵ "La mort et l'Assomption de la Sainte Vierge," Coll. *Studi e Testi*, 114. Città del Vaticano, 1944.

⁵⁶ *Origo divino-apostolica doctrinae erectionis Beatissimae Virginis ad gloriam caelestem quoad corpus*, passim. Innsbrück, 1930.

⁵⁷ *La Asunción de María*, 260ss. Madrid, 1947.

⁵⁸ Cf. *Estudios Marianos*, 6 (1947), 302.

⁵⁹ "De doctrina Assumptionis corporalis B. Virginis," etc. in *Angelicum*, 15 (1938), 11.

⁶⁰ Cf. *Estudios Marianos*, 6 (1947), 312-322.

⁶¹ Cf. *ibid.*, 317-322.

⁶² "La Asunción corporal de la Santísima Virgen y su Concepción Inmaculada," in *Verdad y Vida*, 6 (1948), 167-180.

⁶³ "De glorificatione corporali B. M. Virginis," in *Ephem. Theol. Lov.*, 8 (1931), 443.

⁶⁴ Cf. *Verdad y Vida*, 6 (1948), 10.

⁶⁵ Cf. *Estudios Marianos*, 6 (1947), 16.

⁶⁶ "O argumento da Imaculada. Conceição e a Assunção," in *Rev. Ecl. Bras.*, 10 (1950), 188-203.

⁶⁷ Cf. *La Vergine Immortale*, p. 3. Rome, Belardetti, 1949.

⁶⁸ Cf. "L'Assomption et l'Immaculée-Conception," in *Congrès Marial du Puy-en-Velay*, Aug. 15, 1949, p. 242-282.

necessary connection? An affirmative answer, based on Scripture and the Magisterium of the Church, seems to me a most certain teaching.

1. *Argument from Sacred Scripture.* We read in Genesis (2, 17) "In what day soever thou shalt eat of it (the fruit), thou shalt die the death." Still more explicit is the following: "For God made not death . . ." (*Wisdom* 1, 13, ss.); "God created man incorruptible . . . but, by the envy of the devil, death came into the world." (*Wisdom* 2, 23, ss.); "from the woman came the beginning of sin, and through her we all die." (*Eccli.* 25, 33). The necessary nexus between sin and death is sufficiently apparent from these texts, yet it is even more clearly expressed by St. Paul in his Epistle to the Romans: "Wherefore as by one man sin entered into this world and by sin death; and so death passed upon all men, in whom [i. e., because] all have sinned." (5, 12).

Death, therefore, in the present historical order, is not the *natural condition of nature* but the punishment of sin: all die because everyone sinned in Adam. If, therefore, someone did not sin in Adam, as in the instance of the Blessed Virgin, that one, by the condition of his nature, would not be subject to death. Freuendorf,⁶⁹ moreover, has shown this to be the traditional interpretation of the famous Pauline text; Père Lagrange, O. P., F. Prat, S. J., and J. Vosté, O. P.⁷⁰ concur in this interpretation. For a natural descendant of Adam, therefore, to contract the obligation of dying, the mere condition of nature does not suffice; nor is the original sin *originans* of Adam enough, rather there is required original sin *originatum*, i. e. personally and individually contracted, since only this personal and individual contracting of fault can be a sufficient reason for being subject to the necessity of dying.

2. *The argument from the Magisterium of the Church.* We maintain that this is yet more evident because of the second

⁶⁹ Freuendorf, *Erbsünde und Erbtod beim Apostel Paulus*. Eine religionsgeschichtliche und exegetische Untersuchung ueber Roemerbrief 5, 12-21. Münster, 1927.

⁷⁰ Cf. J. Vosté, *Studia Paulina*, p. 81, n. 2, Rome, 1941.

Canon of the 2nd Council of Orange (529), confirmed by Pope Boniface II (as has been recently demonstrated by the conclusive arguments of Frs. Koser⁷¹ and Kloppenberg, O. F. M.).⁷² The Canon states: "If anyone asserts that Adam's sin injured himself alone and not his progeny, or certainly professes that corporeal death alone, which is the punishment of sin, and not sin itself, which is the death of the soul, was transmitted through one man to the entire human race, he attributes injustice to God and contradicts the Apostle who declared, "Through one man sin entered into the world. . . ." ⁷³ According to the obvious sense of the words, two things are asserted in the canon, namely: 1) the sin of Adam injured not only himself but also his descendants; 2) that bodily death (*reatus poenae*) is not transmitted to Adam's descendants without original sin (*reatus culpae*) being also transmitted, because otherwise God would be considered unjust.

The first assertion is against Pelagius,⁷⁴ the second against Julian of Eclanum,⁷⁵ the famous adversary of St. Augustine. Both Pelagius and Julian were refuted by St. Augustine and the Fathers of the 5th and 6th Centuries (S. Prosper, S. Fulgentius, S. Gelasius, etc.) in almost the identical words later used by the 2nd Council of Orange. The words, therefore, of the Council of Orange, inasmuch as they reflect the mind of those Fathers, should be interpreted according to their statements. According to these Fathers the fact that Adam sinned (*peccatum originale originans*) is not sufficient to fall under the necessity of dying,

⁷¹ C. Koser, O. F. M., "A definibilidade da Assunção de Nossa Senhora," in *Rev. Ecl. Brasil*, 7 (1947), 246-277; "O Argumento da Assunção fundado sobre o II Cânon do II Sínodo de Orange," in *Rev. Ecl. Brasil*, 10 (1950), 203-240.

⁷² B. Kloppenburg, O. F. M., "O Segundo Cânon de Orange (59) e a Assunção de Maria," in *Rev. Ecl. Brasil*, 9 (1945), 608-635; "O nexo entre Pecado e Morte," in *Rev. Ecl. Brasil*, 8 (1948), 259-289; "Quaestões teológicas em Torno da morte da Mãe de Jesus," in *Rev. Ecl. Brasil*, 9 (1949), 307-333.

⁷³ Denziger, 175.

⁷⁴ "Peccatum Adae solum ipsum laesit, et non genus humanum," So say the Pelagians. Cf. P. L. 48, 109-115; St. Augustine, "De gestis Pelagii" 35, P. L. 33, 111 etc.

⁷⁵ "Apparet non peccatum Adae ad posteros transisse, sed mortem," *Fragm.*, in *Op. imp.* 2; 63. P. L. 45, 1169 etc.

but rather there is required the individual contraction of fault (*peccatum originale originatum*) because the death of the body (*reatus poenae*) without death of the soul, i. e., without the individual contraction of sin (*reatus culpae*), would be a real injustice. In the present order of things, therefore, one is not under the necessity of dying merely because he is a descendant of the sinner, Adam, but he must himself, personally, and as an individual, contract the sin of Adam. In an instance, therefore, in which a son of Adam the sinner did not personally contract Adam's sin, he would not fall under the necessity of dying, otherwise, "Injustice is attributed to God." Now this is precisely the situation in the case of the Blessed Virgin. For it is *de fide* that she was preserved free from the stain of original sin; it follows, therefore, that she was not under the obligation of death. Consequently, either she did not die (this is the opinion of some) or if she did die (as the majority maintain) it was, as in the case of Christ, for the redemption of mankind, or to satisfy for the sins of others. This coredemptive satisfaction is had through death alone (more explicitly: through the voluntary acceptance of the possibility of dying) through remaining dead, since once one dies the mere perseverance of death lacks satisfactory value. The Blessed Virgin, therefore, as Coredemptrix, like Christ the Redeemer, ought not to remain dead or under the dominion of death but should immediately arise and be assumed into heaven. Consequently the Immaculate Conception is the root of the Assumption. In other words, having posited, in the present economy of things, a necessary connection between original sin personally contracted and death (or between the death of the soul and corporeal death), one immune from original sin (or from *reatus culpae*) should likewise be immune from death (i. e. from *reatus poenae*). But the Blessed Virgin was free from original sin, or from the death of the soul (*reatus culpae*). Therefore, she should also be free from bodily death (*reatus poenae*). It may be expressed succinctly by stating: she was assumed because she was immaculate (*Assumpta quia Immaculata*).

III

Replies to Objections

Certain objections, are often offered against this conclusion but they are not strong.

1st Objection: After Baptism, death, is no longer the punishment of sin, but merely a penalty (*non poena sed poenalitas*). The same, therefore, may be applied to the Blessed Virgin.

Response: Even if death be called a penalty rather than a punishment, it ever remains, in the present order of things, the necessary consequence or effect of sin personally contracted. Where, therefore, there is no personal contraction of original sin, there should exist none of the consequences or effects of that sin, and consequently neither death nor the necessity of dying. Any effect is washed away, when the cause is removed. The *preservation* from original sin (proper for the Blessed Virgin) and the *liberation* from sin personally committed (the function of Baptism) are worlds apart.

2nd Objection: Death is not only the punishment of sin but is also natural to man (*conditio naturae*). The Blessed Virgin, therefore, not because of punishment due to sin but because of her human nature, should have died. This opinion has many adherents.⁷⁶

Response: What has already been said about the necessary nexus between original sin and death indicates that this objection is totally beside the point. No one denies that death is natural to man, and consequently that man, if *philosophically* considered, is *intrinsically mortal*; but if man is considered (as is fitting) not philosophically but *historically* i. e. as *de facto* God constituted him, then he must be said to be *extrinsically immortal*. For in man, as *de facto* God constituted him, or as he is historically (not philosophically) considered, there is found a certain *extrinsic* (preternatural) power capable of blocking in-

⁷⁶ Thus Petrus Aquilanus, *III Sent.*, d. 3, q. 1, p. 37 ed. Paolini, 1907. Cf. also *Studia Mariana* I, 688ss.

trinsic (natural) corruptibility. Only original sin personally contracted causes or can cause the loss of this supernatural power. For this reason, in the present historical order, the death of man is always the punishment of sin, whether it be our own (which is true with us) or that of others (as was the fact with Christ and the Blessed Virgin). If there were no sin, neither Adam nor his descendants would have died, nor been subjected to the necessity of dying. Adam, moreover, was *intrinsically mortal* even before his sin. Yet no one infers from this that before he sinned, Adam was subject to the necessity of death. For it was only after he sinned and because of his sin that he was obligated to die inasmuch as he lost his extrinsic preternatural power. It follows that in the descendants of Adam, death is not only consequent upon their natures but is also a consequence of sin personally committed. It is obvious, therefore, that the Blessed Virgin could not die merely because of her human nature.

3rd Objection: The essence of death does not consist in the simple separation of the soul, but in the corruption of the grave. Therefore. . . .

Response: The distinction here made is wholly arbitrary, for the essence of death, threatened by God as the punishment of sin (Gen., 3, 19), consists in the separation of the soul from the body. The subsequent corruption is only a necessary consequence of this separation. This is the doctrine of St. Augustine,⁷⁷ the Council of Carthage,⁷⁸ Alexander of Hales,⁷⁹ etc. In the present order historically considered, therefore, the corruption of the grave and even more especially the separation of the soul from the body is the consequence and punishment of sin. As a result immunity from original sin necessarily confers

⁷⁷ "Mors igitur ista, qua spiritus a corpore separatur . . . in omnes homines pertransiit," Op. imp. 2, 66. P. L. 45, 1170.

⁷⁸ "Quicumque dixerit Adam primum hominem mortalem factum, ita ut, sive peccaret sive non peccaret, moreretur in corpore, hac est de corpore exiret. . . ." Denziger, 101.

⁷⁹ "Dicendum quod in ipsa separatione animae a corpore dicitur mors poena corporalis," *Summa* (ed. Quaracchi), III, n. 213.

immunity not only from corruption but even from the separation of the soul and the body.

Bearing all this in mind, the *necessary connection* between the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption seems obvious. For the Immaculate Conception is the fundamental and principal apodictic argument for proving the bodily Assumption of the Mother of God. In my opinion, this one argument suffices to demonstrate apodictically the definability of the Assumption. For the objections, which are offered by a *few* theologians⁸⁰ against this proposition, when weighed carefully, seem to be of little consequence. We, therefore, may conclude: the Blessed Virgin was assumed, because she was immaculate.

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⁸⁰ The outstanding names are: Ernst, Lennerz, Renaudin, Merkelbach, Parent, Semmelrot, Rahner, Coppens, Colombo, Bonnefoy.

THE ASSUMPTION AMONG MARY'S PRIVILEGES



INTRODUCTION

THE Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary into heaven has received more attention from theologians within the past few years than any other Marian doctrine. This, no doubt, is due in part to the request of Our Holy Father, Pope Pius XII, in his letter, *Deiparae Virginis*, of May, 1946, to the Catholic bishops in which he invited them to send to the Holy See their views on the definability of the Assumption. Theologians have seized this opportunity to express their opinions, and even national Mariological Congresses (e.g., in Italy, Spain, France, Portugal, Argentina and Canada) have been organized to promote the definition of the Assumption.

It is agreed among theologians today that the Assumption can not be proved by any historical method since it belongs strictly to the field of theology. It is true that one might produce witnesses for the death of Mary and even for the departure of her body from this earth, but how could there be eye-witnesses for the glorification of Mary's body and soul? How could we possibly know the state of Mary's body and soul in heaven unless it were revealed to us by God? ¹

Many arguments are given to show that the Assumption is a revealed truth that belongs to the deposit of faith. However, there is great disagreement among the theologians as to the relative value of the proposed arguments. This is especially true of the value of theological arguments that attempt to derive the fact of Mary's bodily glorification from other Marian privileges. This prompts us to ask the question: Is there a

¹ *Summa Theol.* III, q. 55, a. 2, ad 2um.

connection between these privileges? Does the divine maternity, the Immaculate Conception, the virginity, etc., demand or cause or contain the doctrine of the Assumption? It is the purpose of this paper to examine this question and to determine the relation of Mary's Assumption to her other privileges. In doing so we shall give particular attention to the various opinions expressed by some contemporary theologians.

To avoid confusion it would be well at the outset to understand the meaning of the word Assumption. Applied to Our Blessed Lady it means the passage of her glorified body into heaven, and its reunion there with her soul.² In examining the connection between the Assumption and other Marian privileges we shall confine our investigation to the following privileges: Divine Maternity, Immaculate Conception, Virginity, Sanctity, and the Association of Mary with Christ in the work of the Redemption (Coredemption).³

THE DIVINE MATERNITY

What is the connection between the divine maternity and the Assumption? Theologians are not agreed, as we shall see, although it is commonly admitted that there is some connection, since the divine maternity is a fundamental privilege of Mariology and the source and root of all Mary's graces and privileges. From the earliest times Christian piety has found the Assumption contained in some way in the divine maternity. After the proclamation of the dogma of the divine maternity in the Council of Ephesus, we find for the first time a solution to the problem of Mary's corporal destiny. Moreover, the first clear affirmation of the Assumption is found in the sermon of Pseudo-Modestus of Jerusalem in the eight century. The

² Although we firmly hold that Mary died and rose from the dead, nevertheless we do not believe her death and resurrection pertain to the essence of the mystery of the Assumption. A similar thesis was defended in a public disputation at the Gregorian University, Dec. 12, 1946. *Gregorianum* XXVII (1946) 639.

³ The connection between the Queenship of Mary and the Assumption is elaborated by M. Jugie, A. A., *La Mort et l'assomption de la Sainte Vierge*. (Città del Vaticano 1944), 656.

author bases his belief on the privilege of the divine maternity.⁴ Finally, among the thousands of petitions sent to the Holy See from 1863 to 1940 requesting the definition of the Assumption, three hundred and thirty-seven petitioners based their argument on the divine maternity.⁵

But precisely in what sense is the Assumption connected with the divine maternity? This question is warmly debated today as theologians weigh different arguments in an effort to obtain the definition of Our Lady's Assumption. Some find no necessary relation between the two privileges but admit an argument of simple convenience and, in some cases, of the highest convenience.⁶ Still others find a necessary connection. They say the Assumption flows by way of strict theological conclusion from maternity. Finally, there are those who claim that the analysis of the divine maternity contains the Assumption, and that, consequently, the latter is formally implicitly revealed in the former.

Before examining these opinions it is necessary to realize that divine maternity is understood by some in too restricted a sense, and by others, in a very broad sense. This gives rise to different opinions. We avoid both extremes and understand by divine maternity not only the physical act of conception and generation of the Son of God, but the supernatural and meritorious consent which preceded conception and the consequent quasi-infinite dignity that necessarily accompanies it.

Among the more recent studies of the problem is that of

⁴ L. Laurent, O. F. M., "L'Assomption et la maternité divine." in "L' Assomption de la Très Sainte Vierge," *Congrès Marial du Puy-en-Velay* (Paris, J. Vrin, 1950), 138.

⁵ J. Fr. Bonnefoy, O. F. M., "Définibilité de L'Assomption," in *L'Assomption de la Très Sainte Vierge. Congrès Marial du Puy-en-Velay* (Paris, J. Vrin, 1950), 236.

⁶ A thing can be convenient in two senses: 1) the opposite is inconvenient (necessitating or positive convenience), 2) the opposite is not inconvenient. This second type of convenience is called simple convenience. In this sense we speak of the creation of the world as convenient. It would not be contrary to God's perfection if He did not create. In this paper when we speak of the connection between the privileges of Mary and the Assumption being convenient or of the highest convenience, we refer to simple convenience. Cf. G. Roschini, O. S. M., *Compendium Mariologiae*, (Romae, 1946), 48-51.

Father Bonnefoy. The learned Franciscan believes that no theological reason based on any one of Mary's privileges gives more than an argument of simple convenience. Hence, he sees no necessary connection between the divine maternity and the Assumption.⁷ Father Friethoff, likewise, expresses this conservative view: "*Tamen ex sola assignatione maternitatis divinae non haberi videtur argumentum necessarium pro assumptione. Unde maternitas divina non est ratio nisi convenientiae, quamvis permagnae.*"⁸ In a very recent article Fr. Laurent, O. F. M. concluded that the principal reasons adduced by theologians to show the connection of the Assumption with the divine maternity do not exceed the value of the highest convenience.⁹

On the other hand, there are theologians who see a necessary connection between the two privileges. Dom Frénaud believes that the Assumption follows from the divine maternity as a strict theological conclusion, and that it is implicitly revealed in the divine maternity. Fr. Crisóstomo de Pamplona also sees a necessary connection between the two privileges. For him the permanence of Mary in death would be inconvenient, that is, impossible, because contrary to the dignity of the divine motherhood. He cites Roschini and Jugie as supporters of this opinion.¹⁰ Bover says that the nature of the connection between the two privileges was vigorously discussed at the Marian Congress of Montserrat in August, 1946. All admitted at least an argument of convenience but some denied that there was a necessary connection between the two privileges. Bover believed the reasons advanced at Montserrat left some room for doubt and so he proposed his own argument to prove that the Assumption flows by way of logical necessity from the divine maternity.¹¹ At the Franciscan Marian Congress in Italy in

⁷ J. Fr. Bonnefoy, O. F. M., *op. cit.*, 236.

⁸ C. Friethoff, O. P., "De Doctrina Assumptionis corporalis B. Mariae Virginis rationibus theologicis illustrata," in *Angelicum*, 15, (1938), 13.

⁹ L. Laurent, O. F. M., *op. cit.*, 150.

¹⁰ Crisóstomo de Pamplona, O. F. M. Cap., "La Asunción basada en los grandes privilegios marianos," in *Estudios Marianos*, 6 (1947), 264-265.

¹¹ *La Asunción de María*, (Madrid 1947), 218.

1947 Father Caggiano could find no reason to believe that the Assumption is formally implicitly revealed in the divine maternity. Similarly, he rejected the absolute connection between these two privileges proposed by Jugie, whose opinion we shall discuss later. However, he does admit a moral connection between these two privileges that is so intimate and strict that the Assumption is without doubt a consequence of the divine maternity.¹²

Finally there are theologians who take an extreme view. Father Esteve, for example, claims there is an intrinsic necessary connection between the divine maternity and the Assumption, and that the Assumption is formally implicitly revealed in the divine maternity.¹³ Father Jugie in his monumental work also finds the Assumption formally implicitly revealed in the divine maternity and sees an absolute necessary connection between these privileges.¹⁴

What shall we say of these various opinions? It is impossible to examine every one in this limited article. We must therefore be content to state some general conclusions with a few pertinent remarks concerning the arguments of Jugie. In the first place, the wide divergence of opinions is sufficient to make us hesitate to admit a necessary connection between the divine maternity (in the sense defined above) and the Assumption. Secondly, an examination of the arguments proposed does not convince us that the Assumption is formally implicitly revealed in the divine maternity. Now we can conceive the divine maternity without the Assumption. An analysis of the former does not contain the latter. Furthermore, no convincing argument has been proposed to show that the Assumption flows necessarily, that is, by way of a strict theological conclusion, from the maternity. We believe Laurent has ably exposed the fallacy in the rather new argument of Dom Frénaud.¹⁵ Finally,

¹² E. Caggiano, O. F. M., "L'Assunzione della B. Virgine nei donni Mariani," *Atti del Congresso Nazionale Mariano dei Frati Minori d'Italia* (Romae, 1948), 642.

¹³ H. Esteve, O. Carm., "La Asunción y los principios Mariológicos," *Estudios Marianos*, 6 (1947), 226, 233.

¹⁴ M. Jugie, *op. cit.*, 641-647; 652.

¹⁵ L. Laurent, O. F. M., *op. cit.*, 145-146.

if we examine the traditional arguments, they seem at most to be arguments of high convenience. They are based on the perfect filial love of Jesus for His Mother. It is inconceivable (so the argument goes) that the perfect love of Jesus for His Mother would allow her to suffer the dishonor of permanence in death, when he could easily and in harmony with her dignity glorify her body in heaven immediately after death.

We do not find this argument necessarily demanding the Assumption. For, who can measure the love of Jesus for His Mother and determine the exact way in which Jesus must manifest this love? The ways of God are not the ways of man. Therefore, we can not agree with Jugie, who concludes that Christ would sin gravely against the fourth Commandment if He did not grant the privilege of the Assumption to His Mother!¹⁶

In conclusion, there is no doubt that we can find in the divine maternity an argument of the highest convenience in favor of the Assumption. It is indeed most fitting that the body of Our Lady—made sacred by her contact with divinity when she gave of her own substance to form the flesh of the Word Incarnate—be preserved from the dishonor of corruption and permanence in death. Moreover, filial love would not permit Jesus to deprive His Mother of an honor and joy that He could easily grant and one which is in perfect harmony with her quasi-infinite dignity.

IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

Some theologians argue, and with reason, that the same argument that demonstrates Mary's Immaculate Conception also demonstrates the privilege of the Assumption. They point out that, whereas the *Ineffabilis Deus* directly defines and explains the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, it implicitly contains the teaching of the Assumption.¹⁷ It would seem then

¹⁶ J. Coppens, "La definibilité de l'Assomption," *Eph. Theol. Lov.*, 23 (1947), 24. He finds the arguments based on filial love of Jesus too subjective and not very solid.

¹⁷ B. Lago, O.F.M., "La Asunción Corporal de la Sma. Virgen y su Concepción," *Actas del Congreso Mariano Franciscano- Español* (Madrid, 1948), 179.

that there is an intimate connection between these two Marian privileges, in fact, a more proximate connection than that which exists between the divine maternity and the Assumption. Our Lady's immaculate soul seems to demand as its natural complement an immaculate body. This view is also strengthened by the answer Pope Pius IX gave to Queen Isabel of Spain, who had petitioned His Holiness to define the Assumption as a dogma of faith. In his answer the Pope said: "*Dubium non est, quin Assumptio eodem modo quo a fidelium communitate creditur, ex conceptione immaculata consequitur.*"¹⁸

What is the relationship between these two Marian truths? Is it a relation of convenience or does the Assumption follow necessarily as a natural corollary from the Immaculate Conception? Or is it contained in the Immaculate Conception as a part is contained in the whole? There is little agreement among the theologians. Some hold that the Assumption does not follow necessarily from the Immaculate Conception but only as a fitting consequence. Renaudin says, "*Assumptio immaculatam conceptionem non necessario comitatur licet illi convenienter respondeat.*"¹⁹

Other theologians see a necessary connection between these two truths and deduce the Assumption from the Immaculate Conception by way of a theological conclusion. For example, Fr. Carol says: "We believe that the doctrine of Mary's Assumption may be drawn from her Immaculate Conception by a somewhat different process, which would give us a theological conclusion."²⁰ Father Longpré calls the Assumption a necessary sequel and effect of Our Lady's Immaculate Conception.²¹

¹⁸ Hentrich, de Moos, *Petitiones de Assumptione corporea B. V. Mariae in coelum definienda ad Sanctam Sedem delatae* (Vatican, 1942), T. I-II.

¹⁹ P. Renaudin, O.S.B., *Assumptio B. Mariae Virginis Matris Dei (Taurini-Romae, 1933)*, ch. 10, 145. Cf. R. Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P., *The Mother of Our Saviour* (St. Louis, 1948), ch. 4, 170, who says this is at least an argument of convenience.

²⁰ J. B. Carol, O.F.M., "The Definability of Mary's Assumption," *American Ecclesiastical Review*, CXVIII, 3 (March, 1948), 169.

²¹ E. Longpré, O.F.M., "Assomption et Immaculée-Conception," *Congrès Mariale du Puy-en-Velay*, 282.

Finally, there are some who see these two truths so necessarily connected that the Assumption is formally implicitly revealed in the Immaculate Conception.²² In fact, Jugie finds that of all arguments, barring none, the Immaculate Conception best demonstrates the fact of Our Lady's Assumption.²³

What can be said of these different opinions? Certainly it is quite apparent that a certain convenience and harmony exists between these two privileges. In the first place, does not the immaculate soul of Mary, free from the corrupting power of concupiscence, demand as a natural complement an immaculate body that is free from even the corruption of the grave? Secondly, since God has preserved Our Lady from sin, would He not also preserve her from the positive punishment of sin: the return of the body to the dust of the earth? Frankly, we believe that we can find more than an argument of convenience for the Assumption. We believe that a necessary connection exists between these two privileges, although we fail to see that the Assumption is formally implicitly contained in the Immaculate Conception. Let us examine two of the more important arguments that favor formal implicit revelation.

Fr. Mueller in his classical work presents the following argument:²⁴ The Blessed Virgin is immune from original sin, and consequently immune from everything that is a punishment for original sin. Yet, to remain dead, and to be subject to corruption is the punishment of original sin. Therefore, the Blessed Virgin was not able to remain dead or to undergo corruption, but lives in heaven where her body is united to her soul. The learned Jesuit says that both premises are revealed and consequently the conclusion is revealed.²⁵

²² G. Roschini, O. S. M., *Compendium Mariologiae* (Romae, 1946), 469.

²³ M. Jugie, *op. cit.*, 623-638.

²⁴ F. S. Mueller, S. J., *Origo divino-apostolica doctrinae evectionis Beatissimae Virginis ad gloriam coelestem quoad corpus*. (Innsbruck, 1930), 75. Father Mueller distinguishes between the act of dying and permanence in death. He believes only the latter is the effect of original sin.

²⁵ D'Alès, S. J., *Rech. Sc. Rel.* (1931), 240 f. says we have only a virtual revelation. Bittremieux, *Eph. Theol. Lov.*, 8 (1931), 467, in a review of Mueller's book, says this is only *argumentum ex convenientia*.

Is this argument valid? We do not think so, since the minor premise is revealed only in a restricted sense. Let us explain. The minor, "to remain dead and to be subject to corruption is the punishment of original sin," is true *only* when applied to those who have contracted original sin. Now, is it not possible that corruption or permanence in death could come to Mary not because of her own sin but because it was fitting that she associate herself with the death of Christ? ²⁶ To answer this objection, it is necessary to show that there is no reason other than sin why Mary should suffer corruption. We can show that her role of Coredemptrix does demand her death, but does not demand her permanence in death. Neither would permanence in death or corruption be of any spiritual advantage to Mary or to mankind. To explain the minor in this way seems valid, yet the conclusion follows not from two revealed premises but by deductive reasoning, and hence we have a true theological conclusion but not formal implicit revelation.

The eminent theologian Jugie devised his own argument from the Immaculate Conception since he found all other attempts had failed to show the necessary connection between the two Marian privileges. According to the actual divine plan, says Jugie, whoever has always been exempt from every sin, has a *right* to the glorious immortality of the body and soul immediately after death or immediately after the time of probation. Yet Mary has always been exempt from every sin. Therefore she has a *right* to immediate glorious immortality at the end of her life on earth. It will be noticed that Jugie argues for Mary's right to immortality of the body because she has a *right* to the state of innocence which Adam enjoyed before the Fall. It does not seem to be true that Mary has a *right* to the state of innocence or a *right* to immortality by reason of her Immaculate Conception. In the first place she had to be redeemed by the merits of Christ. It is true, of course, that her redemption was preservative; nevertheless, it was redemption and consequently she never had a *right* to the state of original

²⁶ C. Boyer, S. J., "Mort de la T. S. Vierge," *Congrès Marial du Puy-en-Velay*, 127.

justice that belonged to Adam before the Fall.²⁷ Secondly, she does, consequent to her exemption from sin, have a right not to suffer death as the punishment for sin, but this does not say that she has a right to avoid death and the grave as such. Now God might permit death and the grave for some reason. They are, after all, natural conditions of the human body. Actually God did will the death of Mary because of her intimate association with Christ. To answer that there may be reasons for Mary's death but none to justify her permanence in death, would be a valid answer, as we mentioned above. But again, we no longer have an argument from the analysis of the concept of the Immaculate Conception, but an argument of deductive reasoning or what is called a theological conclusion.

In other words, we are not convinced that the theologians have yet presented an argument to prove the formal implicit revelation of the Assumption in the concept itself of the Immaculate Conception. On the other hand, we believe that by reason of her Immaculate Conception Mary's body is exempt from the continual state of death and corruption which are in the present economy of salvation the punishment of sin. And since no other valid reason can be offered for the corruption of Mary's body, we think that, as a consequence of her Immaculate Conception, the body of Mary is now joined to her soul, which is, according to our Faith, glorified in heaven.

VIRGINITY

The virginity of the Blessed Virgin (*ante partum, in partu, post partum*) has its foundation in the divine maternity. It was most fitting that the Mother of God be a virgin. Similarly, the virginal integrity of Mary demands, in its turn, for the continuation and perfection of itself, the incorruption of the body in the grave together with anticipated resurrection. In what sense does Mary's virginity demand a glorified body? This is a moot question among theologians. Some see no necessary connection between these two privileges. They concede only an

²⁷ *Ibid.*

argument of convenience. For example, Jugie says, "*C'est en brouillant les notions, en faisant intervenir d'autres privilèges, que certains théologiens essayent de tirer de la virginité de Marie une conclusion théologique proprement dite en faveur de l'Assomption glorieuse.*"²⁸ Certain theologians admit more than an argument of convenience. They see a necessary connection between these two privileges.²⁹ Thus, Friethoff presents first an argument which shows the convenience of the Assumption and then he proposes another which he believes leads to a certain theological conclusion.³⁰ Still others, Mueller for example, find the Assumption formally implicitly revealed in the virginity of Mary.³¹

An appraisal of these various opinions leads us to conclude that the incorruption of Mary's body after death would bring to perfection her virginal integrity. And why deny this added gift? There is no good reason to militate against it and certainly there are reasons why God would grant it. For example, if God preserved Mary miraculously from all corruption in the conception and birth of Christ, surely He would perform the lesser miracle of immediately anticipating the resurrection of her body and thus preserve her from the corruption of the grave. This, we grant, is only an argument of convenience.

But is there an argument that proves the necessary connection between these privileges? Friethoff argues from the fact that Mary is free from the curse of pain in childbirth because of her virginity and believes that she should also be immune from the curse of corruption in the grave because both pain in childbirth and corruption in the grave are different aspects of the punishment of original sin. And if Mary is free from one aspect, she should be free from every aspect of the punishment. We hesitate to adopt this argument because of the following

²⁸ *Op. cit.*, 654. Cf. also Garrigou-Lagrange, O. P., *The Mother of the Saviour*, 170; Crisóstomo de Pamplona, *op. cit.*, 279.

²⁹ A. Luis, C. SS. R., "Valoración comparativa de los argumentos con que suele probarse la Asunción," in *Estudios Marianos* 6 (Madrid, 1947), 301 f.; J. B. Carol, O. F. M., *loc. cit.*, 170; Balić, *Antonianum* XXII, 37-38.

³⁰ C. Friethoff, O. P., *loc. cit.*, 8-9.

³¹ F. S. Mueller, S. J., *op. cit.*, 127 ff.

reasons: first, the argument does not lead necessarily to the Assumption, but rather to incorruptibility in the grave, which is also the lot of some saints; secondly, the conclusion does not seem to be certain. For, even though Mary is free from one aspect of the punishment of original sin, pain in childbirth, it is only probable that by reason of her virginity she would be free from all aspects of this punishment.³² Finally, it seems that the freedom from the various aspects of the punishment of original sin is due to Mary's Immaculate Conception and not to her virginity.

Fr. Balić also attempts to prove a necessary connection between virginity and the Assumption.³³ He argues that the corporal incorruption is the highest perfection of virginal incorruption and safeguards the virginal flesh from all corruption. And that just as we know from revelation that Mary always was a virgin and remained a virgin, so we equally know that Christ did not permit the body of His Mother to suffer corruption in the grave. At the same time incorruption without anticipated resurrection is unintelligible. It seems that we have here only an argument of convenience. It is difficult to hold as certain that virginity *necessarily* demands the Assumption for its highest perfection. Would not incorruptibility without resurrection suffice and safeguard virginal integrity?

Finally, we do not find the argument proposed by Father Mueller convincing. At times he seems to argue from virginity *in partu*, then from perpetual virginity, and finally from the Tradition of the Church. In this last demonstration he finds the Assumption formally implicitly revealed in Mary's perfect immunity from all corruption. In the first place he proposes virginity *in partu* as the ontological foundation for the incorruptibility of the body in the grave. Yet, his conclusion does not seem to exceed the limits of convenience, much less does it demonstrate the formal implicit revelation of the Assumption in virginity *in partu*.

³² M. Jugie, *op. cit.*, 654.

³³ *Antonianum*, XXII, 37-38.

Mueller also attempts to prove that Tradition teaches that Mary had perfect immunity from all corruption. Even if we grant the argument (some do not),³⁴ we can not say that we have here the Assumption formally implicitly revealed in the virginity of Mary, but rather revealed in the more general revelation of perfect immunity from all corruption of which virginity and bodily preservation from corruption in the grave are only parts. However, it should be stated in favor of Father Mueller that he made it quite clear that the Fathers of the Church, who spoke of the connection between these two privileges, did so without claiming that the bodily incorruption of Mary in the grave was logically deduced from virginity *in partu*.³⁵

In conclusion, it seems that to date we have not yet found in the virginity of Mary anything more than an argument of convenience in favor of the Assumption. Some theologians join the divine maternity with virginity and argue for the Assumption from virginal maternity. Such an argument does produce the highest convenience, but does not seem to be demonstrative.³⁶

SANCTITY OF MARY

Mary is the "fairest flower to bloom on the tree of humanity." She is "blessed among women." Sin never had any claim over her. From the first moment of her life her sanctity was superior to the initial and final sanctity of the angels and saints.³⁷ "She possesses a fulness of innocence and holiness that, except God's, no greater than hers can be conceived, and that no mind but the mind of God can measure."³⁸ Does this unique holiness and blessedness in any way postulate the glorification of her body in heaven immediately after death? Does exalted sanctity

³⁴ H. Lennerz, S. J., *De Beata Virgine* (Romae, 1939), N. 142.

³⁵ F. S. Mueller, S. J., *op. cit.*, 185 f.

³⁶ R. Garrigou-Lagrange, "L'Assomption est-elle révélée de façon implicite?" *Doctor Communis*, I (Marietti, 1948), 42.

³⁷ B. Merkelbach, O. P., *Mariologia* (Paris, 1939), n. 84, 173 f.

³⁸ Cf. *Ineffabilis Deus*.

consecrate the body and in any way preserve it from corruption? It has been traditional among theologians and even among some Fathers to answer in the affirmative because they see a connection between these two Marian privileges. For example, among the petitions sent to the Holy See between 1863 and 1940 in which a number of bishops petitioned for the definition of the dogma of the Assumption, one hundred and sixty petitions were motivated by Mary's eminent sanctity.

When we consider Our Lady's fulness of grace and her preservation from the slightest sin, and her immunity from concupiscence, it seems most fitting that God would grant her immunity from the corruption in the grave which in the present economy of salvation is the result of sin. Moreover, we can consider Mary's sanctity from a positive angle. Grace, we know, is the seed of glory; in due time the fulness of grace in Mary's soul blossomed forth into the beatific vision wherein the soul of Mary was eternally glorified. Yet this divine grace even in this valley of tears left its mark on the body of Mary demanding its preservation from concupiscence and thus keeping her sensible nature perfectly subject to her soul. Would not the glory of Mary's soul in the beatific vision which she now enjoys also demand the immediate resurrection of her body so that it might share in this eternal glory?

Do these arguments from Mary's sanctity give us more than an argument of convenience for the Assumption? There are grave theologians who answer in the negative.³⁹ However, there are other theologians who find that, if we join the sanctity of Mary with the privilege of her exceptional blessing among women, then we have more than an argument of simple convenience. We have, in fact, a demonstrative argument that proves the fact of the Assumption. It is the same argument used by Pope Pius IX in the *Ineffabilis Deus* to prove the Immaculate Conception. It is founded on Scripture and the Tradition of the Church. Today many theologians, e.g. Garrigou-Lagrange, Friethoff, Roschini, Luis, etc. find the Assumption to be formally implicitly revealed in this argument.

³⁹ Bonnefoy, O. F. M., *loc. cit.*, 237.

Invoking Scripture and Tradition they base their proof on the following reference: "Hail full of grace, the Lord is with Thee." "Blessed art thou among women."⁴⁰ The Bull, *Ineffabilis Deus*, sums up the interpretation of these passages according to the Fathers and Ecclesiastical Writers. It says, "*Cum vero Patres Ecclesiaeque Scriptores animo menteque reputarent, Beatissimam Virginem ab Angelo Gabriele sublimissimam Matris Dei dignitatem ei nuntiante, ipsius Dei nomine et iussu gratia plenam fuisse, docuerunt: hac singulari solemnique salutatione nunquam alias audita ostendi: Deiparam fuisse omnium divinarum gratiarum sedem, omnibus divini Spiritus charismatibus exornatam, immo eorundem charismatum infinitum prope thesaurum abyssumque inexhaustum adeo ut numquam maledicto obnoxia, et una cum filio suo perpetuae benedictionis particeps ab Elizabeth divino acta Spiritu audire meruerit: benedicta tu inter mulieres, et benedictus fructus ventris tui.*"⁴¹

In the light of Scripture and Tradition we formulate the following argument: The fulness of grace and exceptional blessing exempts Mary from divine malediction. Yet the divine malediction visited on mankind in Paradise includes the pain of childbirth and corruption in the grave for all men.⁴² Therefore, by her exceptional divine blessing Mary is exempt from the pain of childbirth and corruption in the grave. For these two punishments are only part of the whole divine malediction. If Mary is exempt from the malediction in general, she must be exempt from all its parts. It will be noticed that the premises of this argument are revealed and that the conclusion follows by way of explanation and not by way of deductive reasoning. Hence, the conclusion is contained in the premises implicitly as a part is contained in the whole. Thus, there is a necessary connection between the sanctity and blessedness of Mary on one side, and her Assumption on the other. If we deny the Assump-

⁴⁰ *Luc.* 1:28, 1:42.

⁴¹ Cf. *Acta et decreta sacrorum conciliorum recentiorum*, Col. Sac. (Friburgi Bresgoviae, 1882), VI, 839.

⁴² *Gen.* 3:16-19.

tion, we are forced to deny the holiness and exceptional blessing that God visited upon Mary. She would then be subject to divine malediction which is contrary to the teaching of the Church which says, "she was never subject to malediction, and together with her Son is a sharer of everlasting blessing."⁴³

ASSOCIATION OF MARY WITH CHRIST

It is not a dogma of our faith but it is admitted by all that Mary at least remotely was associated with Christ in the redemptive sacrifice.⁴⁴ She is called from the earliest times the New Eve. With increasing popularity she is being called the Co-redemptrix of the human race, in the sense that she has intimately, formally, and immediately cooperated with Christ in the whole process of the objective redemption.⁴⁵ The privilege of the association with Christ in His victory over Satan is sometimes called a functional privilege in contrast to Our Lady's personal privileges, such as divine maternity, Immaculate Conception, and virginity. Yet to be properly understood it presupposes some of the personal privileges of Mary. For example, the role of Mary as Co-redemptrix presupposes that she is the Mother of the Redeemer, whose heart is filled with maternal love and whose immaculate soul is full of grace that surpasses that of all other creatures.⁴⁶ This union of mind and heart of Mother with Son is a fitting preparation for her role on Calvary when she becomes more intimately associated with

⁴³ Cf. *Ineffabilis Deus* in note 41 above.

⁴⁴ C. Boyer, S. J., "Thoughts on Mary's Co-redemption," *American Ecclesiastical Review*, CXXII, 6 (June, 1950), 401.

⁴⁵ "We must admit that the doctrine of Mary's Co-redemption is frequently taught by the Magisterium." *Ibid.*, 409. Some theologians object to the term Co-redemptrix but whether we use it or not (we believe it is justified), the fact remains that the Mother of God, the Mother of the Redeemer, enjoys the privilege of being the New Eve, who is intimately and indissolubly associated with Christ in the work of the redemption. (We believe this relation of association with Christ is revealed even though not defined.) J. B. Carol, O. F. M., "The Problem of Our Lady's Co-redemption," *American Ecclesiastical Review*, CXXIII (July, 1950), 32-51.

⁴⁶ R. Garrigou-Lagrange, O. P., *Doctor Communis* I, 53.

Christ in His redemptive sacrifice in which He won the perfect victory over Satan.

Does this intimate and indissoluble union with Christ the Redeemer in any way call for Mary's Assumption? Does the association of the whole person of Mary (body and soul) on earth with the Redeemer demand or imply or include the association of the whole person of Mary (body and soul) with the Redeemer in heaven? The answer is in the affirmative, and the following is the common argument, which we shall develop later, that is brought forward to declare the nexus between these two privileges: Christ obtained a complete victory over the devil, sin, concupiscence, and death. Mary, the Mother of Christ, who is intimately and indissolubly associated with the victory of her Son over the devil, sin and concupiscence, ought to be associated with Him in the complete victory over *death* by the anticipated resurrection and bodily Assumption. There are a few theologians who hold this is only an argument of convenience.⁴⁷ Jugie, for example, says the New Eve argument is inconclusive.⁴⁸ Bonnefoy, the Franciscan scholar, feels that too much importance has been attached to it. He deplores the fact that theologians speak of it as demonstrating the formal implicit revelation of the Assumption. For Bonnefoy there is no such thing as formal implicit revelation. All revelation is either formal or virtual.⁴⁹

On the other hand, many present-day theologians (and the number is steadily increasing) find the privilege of association a demonstrative argument in favor of the Assumption and believe that the latter is formally implicitly revealed in the former. Among the petitions sent to the Holy See between 1863 and 1940 by the bishops who sought the definition of the Assumption, one hundred and forty-four bishops argued from the complete victory of Mary over the devil and sin.⁵⁰ This argument is not new. It is based on the teaching of the Fathers

⁴⁷ Tanquerey, *Synopsis Theol. Dogm.*, II, n. 1264.

⁴⁸ Jugie, *op. cit.*, 647-649.

⁴⁹ J. Fr. Bonnefoy, *Congrès Marial du Puy-en-Velay*, 236 ff.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

concerning Mary the New Eve. It was invoked by Pius IX in the Bull, *Ineffabilis Deus*, in favor of the Immaculate Conception. "Just as Christ, the Mediator between God and men, having assumed our human nature, blotted out the handwriting of the decree which stood against us and triumphantly affixed it to the cross, so likewise the most Holy Virgin, united with Him by a most intimate and indissoluble bond, together with Him and through Him waged a perpetual warfare against the poisonous serpent and, completely triumphing over him, crushed his head with her immaculate foot."⁵¹ Furthermore, this argument was developed by some two hundred Fathers of the Vatican Council and proposed by them in an effort to obtain the definition of the dogma of the Assumption. In 1900, Terrien brought added attention to this argument when he declared that it not only demonstrates the certainty of the doctrine of the Assumption but shows that it is formally implicitly revealed.⁵² In 1930 Father Mueller in a very scholarly work presented substantially the same argument.⁵³ The noted Dominican theologian, Father Garrigou-Lagrange, says it is the decisive theological argument, especially when one considers its revealed foundations.⁵⁴ Today there are a number of theologians, besides those mentioned above, of every school, who hold that the Assumption is formally implicitly revealed.⁵⁵ At the Marian Congress at Puy-en-Velay (1949) Father Longpré, O. F. M. stated that the whole Scotistic School favors the argument from the victory over the devil,⁵⁶ although Longpré believes (mistakenly, we

⁵¹ *Loc. cit.*

⁵² Terrien, *La Mère de Dieu* (Paris, 1902), II, 343.

⁵³ F. S. Mueller, S. J., *op. cit.*, 32 ff.

⁵⁴ R. Garrigou-Lagrange, O. P., *Doctor Communis* I, 44 ff.

⁵⁵ O. Faller, S. J., *De priorum saec. silentio circa Assumptionem B. M. V.* (Romae, 1946); C. Friethoff, *loc. cit.*, 13 ff.; A. Janssens, O. S. B. "De glorificatione corporali B. V. M.," *Eph. Theol. Lov.*, 8 (1931), 437-445; G. Roschini, O. S. M., *op. cit.*, 298; J. B. Carol, O. F. M., *loc. cit.*, 177; B. Lonergan, S. J., *The Assumption and Theology, Vers le dogme de l'Assomption* (Montéal, 1948), 419; P. I. Duhr, S. J., *La glorieuse Assomption de la Mère de Dieu* (Paris, 1948), 108-115.

⁵⁶ E. Longpré, O. F. M., *Congrès Marial lu Puy-en-Velay*, 276, footnote 79.

think) that it is the same as the argument from the Immaculate Conception. Furthermore, substantially the same thesis was publicly defended at the Gregorian University on December 12, 1946 in the presence of many Superiors of Religious Orders and Church dignitaries, including nine Cardinals.⁵⁷ Finally, the argument from the association of Mary with Christ was formulated by the Carmelite Order on May 16, 1946 in one of its petitions to the Holy See for the definition of the Assumption.⁵⁸

This argument is presented in different forms. Theologians have recourse to Scripture and Tradition to show that the premises are found in the deposit of revelation. But the probative force of the Scriptures, for example, Genesis 3:15 is evaluated differently by theologians. We shall omit any discussion of the relative value of the Scriptures here and simply base our proof on the following argument which was used by the Fathers of the Vatican Council.

Christ's triumph over Satan was a threefold victory over sin, concupiscence, and death.⁵⁹ Yet the Mother of God is shown as being associated intimately and uniquely with Christ in this complete threefold victory over Satan.⁶⁰ Therefore, the Mother of God should be associated with Christ in the victory over death as well as over sin and concupiscence. But victory over death is obtained for the associate of Christ only by a glorious Assumption into heaven. Both premises are revealed and the conclusion follows not as an effect from a cause but as a part contained in the whole. Victory over death is only part of the total victory over the devil. Thus the conclusion is really an

⁵⁷ *Gregorianum* XXVII (1946), 640.

⁵⁸ *Analecta O. Carm.*, 13 (1946), 58-61.

⁵⁹ Pauline Teaching: *Rom.* 5-8; *1Cor.* 15:24, 26, 54, 57; *Heb.* 2:14-15; the consent of the Fathers and theologians.

⁶⁰ This truth was progressively known. At first vaguely in *Gen.* 3:15; then in *Luc.* 1:38, 42-43; *Luc.* 2:35; *Jo.* 19:25, 27; the Fathers after Saint Irenaeus in the Eve-Mary antithesis; the theologians and the Ordinary Magisterium of the Popes, especially Leo XIII, Pius X, Benedict XV and finally Pius XII; the liturgy especially the feast of the Compassion of Mary and of the Seven Sorrows. Cf. Merkelbach, *op. cit.*, 80-84; Garrigou-Lagrange, *Doctor Communis*, 48-50; *Angelicum* 122 (1945), 71 f.; J. B. Carol, O.F.M., "Mary's Co-redemption in the Teaching of Pope Pius XII," *American Ecclesiastical Review*, CXXI (Nov., 1949), 353-361.

explanation of the premises and not a new truth deduced from them. That is why we say the conclusion is a revealed truth contained formally implicitly in the explicit revelation of Mary's association with Christ in His victory over the devil.⁶¹

What then is the relation between the privilege of Mary's association with Christ and the Assumption? The Assumption is not an effect of the privilege of association or a logical consequence of it, but rather is implied in it, that is, contained in it as a part is contained in the whole. In other words, take away the Assumption and the privilege of association in the complete victory with Christ over the devil ceases to exist. The parallelism between Christ and Mary would cease on Calvary. Christ would conquer the devil by His resurrection. Mary, if still held by the bonds of death, would be conquered by the devil.

CONCLUSION

In this paper we have presented an evaluation of some of the theological arguments in favor of the Assumption. Such an evaluation manifests the place of the Assumption in relation to Mary's other privileges. The arguments proposed have not the same probative value. For example, the doctrine of the Assumption is very intimately connected with and clearly demonstrated by the privilege of Mary's association with Christ, for the Assumption is only one aspect of this intimate association. On the other hand, no such intimate and proximate connection appears between the divine maternity as such and the Assumption. The relation is more remote and there appears to be no necessary relation between these two privileges. However, when we join together all the privileges of Mary and relate them to the Assumption they not only demand the Assumption by way of convenience; they present an irrefutable argument that the body of Mary has been assumed into heaven and joined with her soul.

Once we grant the privilege of the Assumption we see the

⁶¹ Cf. *Acta et decreta sacrorum conciliorum recentiorum*. Col. Sac. (Friburgi Bresgoviae, 1882), VI, 839.

wonderful harmony and coherence that the divine plan has worked out in the order of Mary's privileges. It is the final privilege in a series of privileges that proclaim for the Mother of God and the Mother of the Redeemer her absolute immunity from all corruption. By her Immaculate Conception and consequent sanctity she is free from all sin, by her virginal motherhood she is preserved free from corruption of the body in childbirth, and by her Assumption she is spared the corruption of the body in the grave. Viewed in this way the Assumption is the logical consequence and the crowning achievement of all Mary's prerogatives.

While writing the above conclusion, word reached us that Our Holy Father, Pope Pius XII, has made known his intention to define the doctrine of the Assumption as a dogma of Faith on the Feast of All Saints, Nov. 1, 1950. The whole Catholic world rejoices in this happy announcement. For now the Assumption of Our Lady will receive its proper place among the revealed teachings of our Faith. It is in comparison with the Ascension of Christ into heaven that we begin to perceive its true significance. Just as the Ascension of Christ into heaven crowns and seals the role of the Redeemer in the order of the objective redemption, so the glorious Assumption of Mary crowns and seals the role of Mary, Mother and Co-redemptrix, in the order of the objective redemption. Together with Jesus, although subordinate to him, Mary, the second Eve, from her place of honor in heaven not only proclaims her complete victory over the devil and his works, sin and death, but proclaims the wisdom and goodness of God Who has done great things unto her, who reigns as Queen of Heaven and Earth.

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THE ASSUMPTION IN THE SPIRITUAL LIFE



IN the mystery of the Assumption, as presented by the tradition of the Church to our faith and filial devotion, different aspects may be distinguished: the dormition of Mary, the glorification of her soul, her resurrection and the ascent into heaven of her body. We can not, in these few pages, exhaust the richness of each one of these aspects. We shall, therefore, restrict ourselves above all to the last of these, that of the Assumption of the glorious body of Mary. Presupposing the various theological studies which expound the fittingness of this mystery, we shall endeavor, to develop its essential relations to our life as Christians and sons of God. It is, therefore, from the point of view of spiritual theology that we wish to study this mystery here.

The Mystery of the Assumption is a striking sign of the very special love God has for Mary.

By the resurrection and glorification of the body of Christ, God shows the incomparable love which He bears towards His only-begotten Son. The Father could not permit the body of the divine Crucified, His beloved Son in whom He is well pleased, to know corruption. By the bloody death of the cross, Christ bore witness before the eyes of the entire world that divine Love is stronger than death and that His only "food" was to accomplish fully the will of the Father. In so doing, He gave glory to the Name of His Father and proclaimed His sovereign majesty. By the resurrection of the body of Christ, the Father glorified His Son "with the glory which He had" with Him "before the world was" (John 17:5). This resurrection manifests to all eyes the eternal triumph of the love of the Father for Him who was obedient unto death, and who completed the work which the Father had given Him.

In the same way, the mystery of the Assumption reveals to us all the very special love of Jesus for His beloved Mother, in whom He is well pleased, for whom He poured out all His blood. First of all Our Lord, communicated to the soul of His Mother the fulness of His love by permitting her, once the trial upon earth was over, to enjoy the fulness of the beatific vision. She who had been blessed in her faith at the time of the Annunciation, who had been faithful and patient at the moment of the great trial upon Calvary, who had consented to remain on earth with St. John to watch over the infant Church, deserved to live at last by the mystery of the Triune God, "face to face," in full light and in an eternal ecstasy of love. By her beatific vision, Mary lives the very life of God, the very life of her Son. Like Him, she looks upon the Father and loves Him; like Him she lives by His gaze and His love; in the Word and the Holy Spirit, she lives by the Father. To be sure, Mary remains as always the handmaid of her God, but a handmaid who knows all the intimacy of a well-beloved child, who is introduced into the paternal household to rejoice there as a legitimate heir. But the love of Jesus for His Mother aimed more than that. All that He could give her, He would give her. Since He was able to add the glorification and resurrection of Mary's body to the beatification of her soul, Jesus, as the conjoined instrument of the power of God, did it. The glorious Heart of Jesus, burning Furnace of Charity, wished that the whole humanity of Her whom He loved should participate immediately, and in all possible fullness in the splendor and the beauty of His own glorious humanity.

It was truly upon the model of the glorious body of Christ that the body of Mary rose again. What St. Paul tells us of all the members of Christ is obviously and especially true of her who had been chosen in so privileged a manner. "Christ is now risen from the dead, the first fruits of them that sleep; for by a man came death and by a man the resurrection of the dead" (*I Cor.* 15:20). "He will reform the body of our lowliness, made like to the body of His glory" (*Phil.*, 3:21). The glorious humanity of Christ is the instrumental and exemplary

cause of the resurrection of the humanity of His Mother. What Mary had given Him, at the time of the forming of His earthly body, Jesus glorified returns to her a hundred-fold. The body of Mary, like that of all mothers, had served as a natural and living model for the formation of the body of the infant Jesus. Following the forceful expression of St. Louis-Marie Grignon de Montfort, the Holy Spirit had made of her body "the mould of God." The child Jesus resembled His Mother; His feelings, His physiognomy, His characteristics were a continuation of those of His Mother. Jesus, then, by the power of God, raised up her body according to the divine and living model of His glorified body. The glorified body of Mary echoes that of her Son, by continuing and emphasizing all its splendors. The glorious body of Mary is entirely related to that of her Son. Such is the marvelous way in which God fructifies that which one gives Him: Mary accepts the most humble service of maternity by giving Him her flesh and blood; Jesus gives her all the magnificence of His glory. He exalts the humility of the handmaid of God.

The love of Jesus for Mary is such that He would bear no delay. As soon as she finished her long earthly pilgrimage, as soon as she attained to that plenitude of grace and love which the Wisdom of God had fixed for her, the love of the Heart of Jesus wished her to be entirely His. In order that she, like Himself, might be the glory of the Father, He gives Himself entirely to her, that she might live fully through Him in all the glory of God. She, who was the ever loving, compassionate companion in the sorrowful mysteries, is to remain for eternity as the loving companion in glory.

Thanks to the mystery of the Assumption, the strong bonds of love which united the Heart of Jesus to that of Mary during their earthly life unite them now in heaven in a completely perfect way. In fact, there now flourishes between the glorified Christ and His glorified Mother the mystery of a "common life," both intimate and loving, for which the joyful common life of Nazareth was but a preparation. At Nazareth all the human love of the Mother for her Son and of the Son for His Mother

was entirely absorbed into the plenitude of their charity. That common life was indeed a truly family life, but entirely ordained to "the Father's business," entirely subject to His loving will, where the divine love encountered no obstacle and could progressively take possession of the heart of Mary. But this reign of the divine Love in the Hearts of Jesus and Mary remained veiled and hidden to the eyes of men; all was reserved to God. This was truly the hidden life of Jesus and Mary. In heaven, the charity of Mary's heart has attained its full stature and the reciprocal divine love which perpetually unites the hearts of Jesus and Mary radiates brilliantly throughout their glorious humanity. Not only is all human love absorbed by the divine love but this divine love expresses it with splendor, making of their humanity a "burning bush," burning without being consumed. Within, this glorified love divinely harmonises and unites their hearts, permitting them to interpenetrate each other without being fused into one. The heart of Mary receives all the love of the heart of Jesus, but at the same time she returns to Him all the love which she has received from Him. Our poor mortal words are incapable of expressing these mysteries of glory, when the risen body is, so to speak, set on fire by the divine love, being entirely devoted to its service, a "living ostensorium" of its dazzling light.

The mystery of the Assumption, in a word, shows us the quality or, one might even say, the jealousy of the divine love for Mary, by bringing to full flower all the effects of the divine love contained in germ in the privilege of the Immaculate Conception and the divine Maternity. For us, death is a penalty due to sin, and the corruption which follows as a natural consequence is part of that penalty. By reason of her privilege of exemption from original sin, Mary knows death only out of pure love, for her Son and for us. If she accepts death, it is out of an entirely free obedience, in order to live all He has lived, and all that we live, including death. But as for corruption, the body of Christ was not to undergo it. If we must undergo it, it is as a necessary consequence of a fact which may be meritorious in its cause but not in itself. That is why

God in His wisdom asks Mary to accept death with all its consequences in order that, following Jesus and like Him, she may use death to intensify her love of God and increase her merit, but He prevents death from exercising upon the most pure body of Mary the ravages of corruption, for these would have in no wise increased her love and her merit.

This incorruptibility which Jesus possesses by right, in virtue of the mystery of the hypostatic union, Mary receives as the normal consequence of her privilege of the Immaculate Conception. It is truly by the merits of Christ crucified and because of her love that she is found united to Him unto death and after death in this incorruptibility. This latter is truly for us a manifest sign of the unique love which He bears her. In the midst of the human race, she rises like an incorruptible lily, of striking purity, showing us the power and the efficaciousness of the divine love, capable of making use of death to exalt and glorify body and soul, without, nevertheless being subjected to its tyrannical yoke, corruption.

By reason of the close and profound ties which the divine maternity had brought about between Mary and her Son, this divine maternity, both physical and miraculous, demanded both a physical and miraculous recompense, to be brought about in the body of Mary. Mary, at the Annunciation, by her *fiat* had accepted as the "handmaid of God" that "the power of the Most High should overshadow her." In her mystery of the Assumption, the power of the Most High overshadows her eternally in order to exalt her as the beloved Mother of the glorified Christ, associated in His sovereign and divine rule.

This divine and virginal maternity which had brought no affront to the integrity of the body of Mary, had intimately marked her flesh with a divine seal: everything in her was consecrated to her God and to her Son; everything in her was separated from the world and from its deceiving desires. It was normal that her death itself, wholly offered and consecrated to God by obedience and love, should bear no affront to the integrity and purity of her flesh, and should offer to physical laws no occasion to regain over her body their natural rights.

In effect, by the corruption of the flesh, the physical universe exercises its most basic rights over the cadaver of man. The latter must then necessarily become an integral part of the cosmos and concur anonymously in its equilibrium and natural fecundity which is always in movement. This reintegration of the cadaver of man into the cosmos is part of the penalty due to sin. The Church recalls to us on Ash Wednesday, with her maternal realism: "Remember that thou art dust and to dust thou shalt return." For our human psychology, this return of our body to dust is something very humiliating, and can even, at certain moments, nauseate us, giving us that profound disgust which suspends every flight of love and desire. The most extraordinary advances of science will never be able to suppress or absorb this fatal issue of our terrestrial life. It is thus that we can understand that every human philosophy which does not accept the immortality of the soul, if it has any sense of the absolute, will make of this "nausea" which it cannot dominate, the very core of its philosophy.

The body of Mary, living tabernacle of God, promised land, enclosed garden, was not to know this degradation. Like the "Ark of the Covenant," it was to remain intact, for God and the human race, above all the torrents of corruption, which would be unable to touch it. The mystery of the Assumption bears witness to us, therefore, of this marvelous jealousy of the divine love, which not only preserves the soul of Mary intact and immaculate, but does not permit that her virginal body, so totally and so intimately consecrated to God, should be subject to any other laws. Her body is to remain the immediate and exclusive property of her God.

If the mystery of the Assumption shows us how much God has loved Mary, it also shows us how much, in Her, He loves the human race.

Mary is the new Eve, the true "Mother of the Living." By consenting, at the Annunciation, to become the Mother of Jesus, the "Son of the Most-High," He who comes to save us, She

consents at the same time to become the Mother of all those whom He loves as His brothers, whom He considers as "the members of His body," whom He divinely engenders to eternal life. "Thus she understood that in conceiving Jesus," affirms Père Chaminade, "she was to conceive Him whole and entire, that is to say, both His natural body and His mystical body, because she could not separate Him from that which was to be made one with Him."¹

On the Cross, Jesus announced and revealed this mystery of the spiritual maternity of Mary over the whole infant Church. By giving her to John as a Mother, as the final token of His love, He gave her to each one of us, that we might take her "unto our own," as the well-beloved Mother of our Savior, and as our well-beloved Mother. That is why, when the Most Holy Trinity, through the glorious Humanity of Christ, glorified Mary in her soul and in her body, giving her the greatest glory that can be communicated to a simple creature, it is, in truth, all the "members of the mystical body" of Christ which are glorified and sanctified in the most beautiful way in the person of their Mother.

One can not, in effect, separate the Mother from her children; the glory of the Mother is indeed that of her children; her riches and her treasures are indeed their riches and their treasures. A mother who would hold back something, not wishing to share it with her children, would be, in that same measure, no longer a mother but a monster. Mary is not only a perfect Mother, good and loving towards her children, without any egotism, without any self-seeking, but she is more. Her Maternity is divine, founded, therefore, upon a plenitude of divine life, fructifying into love and mercy for her children. That is why if all the mysteries of the earthly life of Mary, the joyful, sorrowful, and glorious mysteries, as well as those of her glorious life in heaven, are all ordained toward the Most Holy Trinity and by Christ, they are at the same time all ordered toward us.

¹ Cf. R. P. G. Chaminade, *Marie la femme promise*, J. Verrier, S. M. (Centre Marial Canadien).

These two movements of her heart, rooted in the same divine life and the same charity, are thus inseparable. With all her soul Mary is the servant of God, but she is at the same time the servant of our souls. Everything she lives, she lives as Virgin and Mother. Everything she can share with her children she desires to share with them. This is how the mystery of her Assumption is for all believers a magnificent divine sign, something unique, a "sign in heaven" of the infinite love of the Most Holy Trinity and of the Heart of Jesus not only for Mary but for all her children as well. By the exaltation of Mary, divine wisdom shows in the most eloquent way both its Love and the fundamental demands of that Love.

By this mystery of the Assumption, God tells us His love, both present and eternal, since the mystery is for us as the promise of the full realisation of the Covenant of God with His people and with all men. This mystery presents to us, in a fully perfected and consummate way, the definitive victory of the alliance of love in the blood and body of Christ over all the powers of evil and the consequences of sin. It is indeed true that the mystery of the Immaculate Conception already clearly shows us the merciful efficacy of the mystery of the Cross. The mercy of Christ crucified is of such power that it is capable not only of rehabilitating prodigal children by restoring to them their nuptial gown and their places as sons in the Father's house, but it can also completely preserve from original sin. It is by virtue of the merits of Christ crucified that Mary is without spot and without the corruption of original sin. Her immaculate privilege is as the purest fruit of Christian grace, the most intimate and radical victory of the mystery of the Cross; that privilege reveals how radical was this victory, and how merciful, with a mercy at once infinitely strong and suave, capable of extirpating evil even in its most hidden roots. But it is only in the mystery of the Assumption that the victory of the Cross appears in its radiance, in its splendor, in all its glorious brilliance, for marvelous though the privilege of the Immaculate Conception is, it remains as an initial gift, as a hidden thing, the seed of an ever growing and intensifying grace

which will go on putting down deeper roots. That is why all the divine riches contained in this initial privilege are fully revealed to us only in the mystery of the Assumption. In this mystery all the efficaciousness of the mercy of the Crucified is seen fulfilled in a completely actual and explicit manner. It shows us that nothing escapes this divine mercy. It teaches us that nothing is to be neglected, that everything in our intellectual and sensitive life must be transfigured, if we are to be worthy of our state as children of God, as children of her who is at once Mother of Christ and Mother of our souls.

Whatever is fulfilled in Mary, in this mystery of the Assumption is for us a model of that which will one day be fulfilled for us. It is by the light of this mystery that we should try to understand all the breadth, all the depth, all the height of Christian mercy, all its efficacy, all its power. This mystery rises up before the believer to remind each one of how God loves the human creature to have exalted it with such splendor; and how He wishes His love to triumph over all and fully mature to beauty.

The Mystery of the Assumption helps us to understand the love of Christ for Mary and, through her, for us. It also allows Mary to exercise her motherhood upon our souls and our Christian lives in a wholly merciful way.

Mary's motherhood of our souls is a wholly divine maternity. It is the mystery of Christ in our souls which she wishes to see flower and become more intense. It is our life as sons of God, as members of Christ, with which she occupies herself with all the attention and all the vigilance of a maternal heart, of a heart which has suffered to give life to her children, and which knows the price of their redemption. This divine life as sons of God and members of Christ, while it first flowers in an entirely interior and spiritual way by the exercise of faith, hope and love, should take progressive possession of all our human activities. Is not the kingdom of God like to the leaven which is to permeate the whole dough, and to the grain of mustard seed,

which must first be buried and hidden in the earth in order to become a tree, "greater than all other herbs," and in whose branches the birds of the air will come to find shelter? (*Matt.*, 13:32.) The evangelical beatitudes which treat the perfection of the Christian life show the extent of that perfection. All purely human virtues must be transformed from within and enlivened by the divine love. To be a Christian, to be a son of God, is not only to belong to God, in the depths of one's soul. It consists further in allowing the love of God to take possession of our whole selves and of all that is truly human in us, so that the "whole face of our earth" may be renewed.

Because of the mystery of the Assumption, the maternal activity of Mary towards us is marvelously adapted to the whole flowering of our divine life. Without entering here into the theological discussions of the precise, proper mode of this maternal activity (i. e., whether it involves physical or moral instrumentality), we can easily understand that this maternal activity of Mary in our spiritual life can not be fully actualized without the mystery of the Assumption. By this mystery she is at once closer to the glorified humanity of Christ and closer to us. That she is closer to Christ we have already shown. That she is closer to us is evident since her glorified body remains the same body which she had on this earth, although now possessing a mode of being completely new, a glorious mode, which renders it perfect. This glorified body is "agile" and "subtle" as St. Thomas tells us; that is to say, it is wholly at the service of the glorified soul. Far from being an obstacle to the fulfilment of the most profound intentions of the glorified soul, it is a marvelous conjoined instrument. Thus we can understand how the mystery of the Assumption can promote and develop in us a greater intimacy with Mary, Mother of Christian souls.

The mystery of the Assumption especially emphasizes more deeply and intimately Mary's mission of mercy to her children. Mary's maternity is exercised in her rôle of Advocate. She never stops receiving our requests, presenting them to Jesus and inter-

ceding with Him for us. She pleads our case, the case of the guilty. As advocate and mother she takes our part, bringing out above all our great weakness and our misery, trying thus to soften our guilt and to call down upon us the clemency and pardon of our Judge. She never stops saying to her Jesus the words that she herself heard from Him on Calvary: "Forgive them, for they know not what they do." At the same time she never stops encouraging us to accept with love, without bitterness, the chastisements and corrections which Christ inflicts upon us to restore us and make us better, by recalling to us How he suffered for us and how much she also has suffered for us. It is truly in sorrow and in tears that she has brought us forth for eternal life. As at Cana, she even anticipates our explicit requests, seeing our needs, our defects, our spiritual and temporal necessities; she speaks of us to Christ and asks Him to hasten for us the hour of mercy. But this divine Maternity is not fulfilled alone in her rôle of "Advocate," great and powerful though this rôle may be. It flows over also into her rôle as dispenser of the treasures of God. St. Ephrem forcefully states: "She is the giver of all goods, the great Lady who is mistress of all things after the Three Divine Persons, a second consoler after the Consoler, the mediatrix of the entire universe after the Mediator" (*Oratio ad Deiparam*).

Mary as Mother of the human race is not a stranger to the government of the wisdom of God over the universe. The Church does not hesitate to apply to the maternal regency of Mary that passage in Scripture which speaks of the wisdom of God: "In every people and in every nation I have had the chief rule . . . and in all these I sought rest" (Ecclus., 24 : 9 sq.). But in a quite special way Mary cooperates in the supernatural government of the Good Shepherd in regard to his sheep: "Then the creator of all things said to me: Let thy dwelling be in Jacob, and thy inheritance in Israel, and take root in my elect. . . . Come over to me, all ye that desire me, and be filled with my fruits. For my spirit is sweet above honey, and my inheritance above honey and the honeycomb. . . . He that

hearkeneth to me, shall not be confounded: and they that work by me shall not sin" (*ibid.*, 12 sq.). In this divine cooperation Mary disposes our souls and our faculties for the action of the Holy Spirit, by rendering them docile to His movements and His good pleasure. She keeps far from us every obstacle which might cause us to deviate from this divine responsiveness. She teaches us to profit divinely from the inspirations of the Holy Spirit, and to lose nothing of His gifts, but rather to make them fructify.

Let us recall the affirmation of St. Grignion de Montfort: "The Holy Spirit is become fecund through Mary, whom He has espoused. It is with her and in her and from her that He has produced His masterpiece, which is God become man, and that He produces every day until the end of the world the predestined and the members of the body of that adorable head. That is why the more He finds Mary, His dear and indissoluble spouse, in a soul, the more He becomes operative to produce Jesus Christ in that soul and that soul in Jesus Christ. This is not to say that the Most Holy Virgin gives fecundity to the Holy Spirit. Rather it means that the Holy Spirit, through the intermediary of the Blessed Virgin, whom He sees fit to use, although He does not absolutely require her, reduces His fecundity to act by producing in her and through her Jesus Christ and His members."² To dispose us for grace and to permit us to profit divinely from it entails the pacification of our passions, our imaginings, and our memories. It is in this mysterious domain where what is called the "external forum" and the "internal forum" meet, there where our psychological "I" finds its proper climate that the maternal influence of the Most Blessed Virgin is most specially necessary. It is there, in effect, that the greater part of our temptations and our combats take place. There is truly the battlefield *par excellence*, where the devil, as the "prince of this world," ceaselessly endeavors to reign, to gain ground, and where Mary, as Mother and as Queen of Heaven, exercises her influence immediately

² *Traité de la vraie dévotion à la Vierge*, ch. I, a. 1.

and incessantly, desiring to establish as rapidly as possible her maternal rule so that nothing may again oppose itself to the full communication of the love of her Son.

It is easy to understand that this role of advocate, of dispensatrix of the treasures of her God, that all this maternal influence can not be perfectly efficacious, suave, encompassing and penetrating except through the mystery of the Assumption, which permits the maternal mercy of Mary to give itself by using her heart, her imagination, her glorified sensitivity. The instrument is then perfectly adapted and rendered perfectly connatural to the aim which it should attain. As advocate, Mary offers to Jesus, through love of us, her glorious heart. This offering is the irresistible argument which Mary ceaselessly uses to obtain the pardon of our sins and the fulfilment of our petitions. The glorious wounds of her heart are always presented to Jesus for us; they are an all-powerful arm whose strength upon the heart of her Well-Beloved she knows. Because Mary is the Mother of our spiritual life we can speak of a certain presence of Mary at the heart of this life. That is why the mystery of the Assumption which permits this motherhood to exercise itself in a more efficacious and suave way enables us to live in a more intimate and more encompassing presence of Mary.

It is this last aspect which we should like to point out here. It will permit us to grasp better the exact sense of certain extremely forceful expressions of the saints, of certain saints living in a very great intimacy with their Mother in heaven. St. Grignion de Montfort, for example, does not hesitate to say: "St. Augustine, surpassing himself and everything which I have just said, affirms that all the predestined, in order to be conformed to the image of the Son of God are in this world hidden in the bosom of the Most Blessed Virgin, where they are watched over, nourished, maintained, and increased by this good Mother until she brings them forth to glory after the death which is properly speaking the day of their birth."³ The

³ *Op. cit.*, Bk. I, Ch. 1.

Flemish mystic of the 17th century, Marie de Ste. Thérèse declares: "This sweet Mother . . . has taken me under her maternal conduct and direction, similar to the schoolmistress who guides the hand of the child to teach it to write. . . . She remains practically without interruption before my soul, drawing me to herself in such a lovable and motherly way, smiling to me, stimulating me, guiding me, instructing me in the way of the spirit and in the practice of the perfection of virtue. In this way I never lose for a single instant the taste for her presence beside that of God."⁴ "She produces the divine life by a perceptible influx of operative, prevenient, fortifying, excitant, or sollicitous graces. . . . The nature of love is to unite one to the object loved. . . . In this sense, very tender, violent, burning and unitive love brings the soul who loves Mary to live in her, to melt in her, to be united to her, and to other effects and transformations."⁵ "Then God shows Himself in Mary and through Her as in a mirror."⁶

The principle to which one must always have recourse when it is a question of understanding the nature of this or that presence is the following: the agent is present in its effect and is present to it in the measure that it acts on it. God the Creator is intimately present to His creature because by His creative activity He reaches that which is most intimate in it. Mary is present to all her children in the measure that she is their mother and acts upon them to communicate to them her treasures. If this motherhood should possess such and such a modality, and thereby a more or less great efficacy, by this very fact the presence of Mary will be modified. But the mystery of the Assumption allows, as we have seen, her divine motherhood to act in a more efficacious, more connatural, more suave, and more encompassing way. Consequently the presence of Mary will be modified in the same way. Of course this presence, just as the maternity upon which it depends,

⁴ "L'Union mystique à la Vierge," in *Cahiers de la Vierge*, May, 1936, p. 55. Cf. also pp. 55-56; 67; 65.

⁵ *Op. cit.*, p. 56.

⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 63.

since it is divine, is the object of our faith. We believe it without seeing it, without grasping it solely with our human intelligence. But the Holy Spirit can give us the experience of it in a more or less continuous way. By our living faith, wholly purified by the gift of understanding and the gift of wisdom, we can experience this divine motherhood, discover all the depths of divine mercy, of tenderness and strength which it comprises, understand intimately how much Mary is our well-beloved Mother, how much we are her children, how much her glorious Assumption allows her to pacify, as though from within and with infinite suavity, all our passions, our imaginings, our memories.

This experience, which is essentially divine and wholly spiritual can have certain ramifications and extensions in our psychological, affective, imaginative, and sensitive life, corresponding to the maternal influence of Mary on that psychology. We are then seized with a profound recollection which pacifies all our being and causes us to live intimately with the merciful love of the Heart of our Mother. Our child's heart begins to beat in unison with the heart of its well-beloved Mother and to live fully with her silent and loving life, wholly dependent upon that of her Son. We must clearly distinguish this divine experience of the intimate presence of Mary in our soul and even in our psychological "I" from charismatic experiences, particular revelations, and apparitions (where, of course, the mystery of the Assumption also can have a very great rôle to play) but we can not enter here into such a study which would carry us too far afield. Furthermore these charismatic apparitions concern more the social and temporal aspect of the life of the Church than the properly supernatural life of each of the members of Christ.

We can understand better at the end of this study why, in the midst of the terrible anguish which afflicts our poor humanity, in the midst of most atrocious and most cruel tribulations which men must bear, Christ in His mercy presents to us ever and ever more clearly the glorified humanity of His Mother and our

Mother as His great triumph, His trophy of glory, in order that by contemplating it and loving it we may remain faithful and patient to the end. This mystery of the Assumption is for believers the divine answer to all the philosophies of hatred and death, since it proclaims the absolute, definitive, and eternal triumph of divine Love over death and corruption.

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THE PLACES OF THE ASSUMPTION

1743

SAINTE Epiphanius, Bishop of Salamis in Cyprus, was the first Christian author to approach forthrightly the question of the destiny of the Mother of the Savior in the period subsequent to that depicted in the Gospels. He did not settle the question, because the arguments which he considered did not seem to him to be decisive. He was deeply moved, nevertheless, by the grandeur of the marvel suggested to his mind by Luke 2: 35 and Apocalypse 12: 14.¹ "It is possible," the holy doctor added, "that that was accomplished in Mary. I do not assert this absolutely, nor do I say that she remained immortal, but neither do I conclude that she has died." The close of Mary's life on earth, therefore, was envisaged as a glorious passage from earth to heaven, untrammelled by death or as a more or less prolonged departure surrounded with extraordinary honors. Epiphanius concluded that if Sacred Scripture has maintained a complete silence concerning the fact, as to whether it was in the one manner or the other, it was due to the grandeur of the miracle. He also declined to fix the site where the glorious passage of Our Lady to heaven occurred.

A contemporary of Saint Epiphanius, Timothy, priest of Jerusalem takes a more positive stand. He would have Mary, while remaining immortal, transported into the Elysian Fields, whose gates Jesus had opened on the day of His Ascension. This rapprochement between the Assumption and the Ascension has, perhaps, influenced the general localization of the triumph of

¹ Ed. Note:

Luke 2: 35—"And thy own soul a sword shall pierce, that, out of many hearts thoughts may be revealed."

Apoc. 12: 14—"And there were given to the woman two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the desert, unto her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the face of the serpent."

Mary verified throughout the chain of tradition.² This tradition is linked to the Gospel fact by the following analogy presented to us by the *Acta Joannis*, attributed to Prochorus. St. Peter, the central figure in the scene, recalls to his colleagues the command of the Master regarding the preaching of the Gospel: "Now," says he, "that the grace of the Holy Spirit has descended upon us all, let us seek naught but to fulfill the order of the Master, especially since the Mother of us all has passed from this life to another."

With the Syrian poet, James of Saroug (451-521) it seems that we hit upon a more precise localization. The poet seems to situate the obsequies of the Virgin upon the Mount of Olives, "on the Mount of the Galileans in a grotto of rock," provided that the Galilee of Mount Olivet be a reality admissible in Jerusalem's topography. At any rate, it is apparently at the base or upon the slopes of the mountain rising to the east of Jerusalem that one of the variants of the *Acta Joannis* fixes as the residence of Mary: "Sometime after Our Lord Jesus Christ had ascended into heaven, it came to pass that all the Apostles assembled at Gethsemani, where His Immaculate and all Holy Mother resided." In the light of these texts, one would be led to believe that the Blessed Virgin, after the Ascension and the dispersal of the Apostles, had chosen an abode in the eastern sector of the Holy City, comprising the rural locale of Gethsemani and the slope of the Mount of Olives. The most ancient descriptions, however, do not insist upon the proximity of a tomb relative to the dwelling of the Mother of Jesus.

With the account of Pseudo-Méliton known by the title *Transitus Mariae*, composed about 550, we meet a more crystalized form of the account which hitherto had been somewhat subject to the fluctuations of popular imagination. In this account, particularly, topographical precisions receive some sharply defined support. In the home of the relatives of the Apostle Saint John on the Mount of Olives, an angel bestows

² Ed. note: Since the site of the Ascension is on the Mount of Olives to the east of Jerusalem, the rapprochement mentioned in the text would influence the localizing of the place of the Assumption in the same sector.

upon Mary a palm from the Garden of Paradise to be carried before her bier, for she is to die within three days. The Virgin requests that she be protected against the onslaughts of Gehenna. John arrives from Ephesus. Like Paul, he comes upon a cloud. At the third hour of the third day, Jesus arrives, escorted by angels, to invite His Mother to come into the repose of eternal life. Mary asks to be spared the sight of the spirits of hell. Although she is to see them according to the common law, they will have no power against her. "Come in all confidence," He says to her, "the heavenly legions await you." At these words the Virgin reclines upon her couch and breathes forth her spirit, while the Apostles are dazzled by a brilliant light. Then, the Lord commands Mary to be buried in a new sepulchre situated close by the City on the eastern side, there to await His return. After this, He entrusts the soul of Mary to Michael the Archangel "prefect of Paradise and leader of the Hebrew nation." After Jesus and His angelic entourage have begun their return journey, the funeral cortege sets out across the city. At its head John holds a palm branch. The body is borne by the Apostles Peter and Paul. Peter intones the *In exitu*, and the Apostles take up the psalmody. At this point, the incident occurs which the Byzantine icons have made renowned. Attracted by the hubbub of the cortege, which numbered not less than five thousand people, a Jew, prince of the priests, violently places his hands upon the coffin to stop it. His insolence is punished through a miracle, for his arms remain fastened to the coffin. Peter, thereupon, demands from the unfortunate man an act of faith in the dignity of Mary. The Jew devoutly kisses the coffin and recovers the use of his arms. Seizing a palm branch, he himself begins to preach Christ.

If, at this point, we halt, somewhat perplexed as to the road followed by the cortege, we can assert that the narrator envisages the house where Mary died to be the one upon the Mount of Olives of which dwelling John was considered the owner. Less difficulty is offered by the terminus of the funeral cortege.

The narrator resumes: "The Apostles arrive at the place in the Valley of Josaphat which the Lord has shown to them. After depositing Mary in a new tomb, they close its entrance." The location has been indicated previously in these terms: "... close by the City on the eastern side." In addition, in this narration we again find certain elements reminiscent of the Gospel account of the burial of Jesus. Since the Apostles have besought Jesus to raise the body of His Mother and to conduct her with Him to heaven, Gabriel rolls back the stone so as to afford a passageway. At the summons of her Son, Mary leaves the tomb, the while blessing the Lord. Jesus entrusts her to angels who transport her to heaven, as a cloud conceals the marvel from human eyes.

Thus, it is plain how deeply implanted had become the theory concerning the burial and, in consequence, the conviction that Mary had been buried in the Valley of Josaphat where also were manifested the wonders of the Assumption. Popular belief, then, had overcome the hesitations of a Saint Epiphanius, at the same time continually adding variations to the popular accounts. Thus, for example, the abode of Mary was moved to Bethlehem, and competition arose between the town of the Nativity and the Holy City. It was related that the Apostles themselves came to Bethlehem, thereby causing a great commotion among the proponents for Jerusalem, which, however, finally succeeded in maintaining its pretensions.

An episode, widely diffused in Iconographic tradition, is the arrival of the Apostles at the tomb of Mary through the air, after receiving the news of her death. Thomas, however, arriving late, refuses to believe in the Assumption, but the Virgin herself from on high bestows her blessing upon him and makes him a gift of her sash. At the sight of this token, all hesitancy disappears from the mind of the disciple. Several markings upon rock in the vicinity of Gethsemani preserve to this day the memory of this legendary episode.

The descriptions of the last days of Mary, just presented, eventually became known through the *Miraculorum Liber*

(Book I) of Gregory of Tours. This latter, it is thought, is based upon the Latin translation of a Jacobite-Syrian treatise contemporaneous with James of Saroug.

Anyone concerned with the places sanctified by the Mother of Jesus at the end of her earthly life cannot escape the question of the place of her Dormition. At the beginning of the 7th century, we meet with the determination of this place as the Basilica of Sancta Sion.³ It is quite worthy of note that from the house of Mark or James, Sancta Sion, or the Basilica of the Cenacle, has by then become the house of the Apostle John. Consequently, it has become the house where the Virgin must have lived out her days since John the Apostle, after the Passion, received the Mother of the Savior into his own home. Under the pressure of the apocrypha, the 8th century adopts this solution as something most certain. The ardent piety of the Middle Ages towards Mary is sufficient to explain why the fact of the Dormition brought so many to the vast Basilica and graced it with the official title "Sancta Maria de Monte Sion."

Hardly had he passed beneath the great portal of the Basilica when the pilgrim was attracted to the left by a small structure surmounted by an urn which was encircled with this inscription: *Exaltata est Sancta Dei Genitrix super choro angelorum*. The mosaic embellishing the walls of this chapel, which represented the (Blessed Mother's) death chamber, depicted the scene of the Dormition with all the details canonized even to our own day by Byzantine Iconographers. As the dead Virgin lies fully garbed, with hands folded upon her breast, Jesus stands near the bed, holding the soul of His Mother under the form of a resplendent child. The Apostles, divided into two groups at the head and the foot of the death bed, give way to their grief. In the background two holy women lament; above, two angels hold themselves in readiness to receive into their veiled hands the soul which Jesus raises in His.

In one of his homilies on the Dormition, Saint John Dama-

³ Ed. note: This was in the western part of the City of Jerusalem.

scene summons up this scene, proclaiming Sion to be "the Acropolis of the Churches, the residence of the Apostles, the place where John the Theologian had received the Mother of God after the return of her Son from the dead. Therefore, it is in that place that the Blessed Virgin reclined upon her thrice holy couch. . . ."

In drawing a conclusion, the localization of the death of Mary in the Sanctuary of the Cenacle could rigorously be connected without great difficulty with the burial in the Valley of Josaphat, previously acknowledged by the apocryphal literature of the *Transitus*. With the death once established at Sancta Sion, it was an easy matter to trace a funeral cortege from the holy place over to the Cedron,⁴ where there were to be seen numerous tombs cut into the rocks. The valley called the Valley of Josaphat could thereby resume the normal role it occupies in the more ancient theory assigning the demise of Mary to the east of the City on the slope of the Mount of Olives. The legendary episode of the Jew, Jephonias, whose two arms were unloosed, found a natural place during the procession between Sancta Sion in the western sector of the City and the Valley of the Cedron or of Josaphat which is to the East and which has served as a cemetery even from ancient times. Nonetheless, it does not seem as though the ancient witnesses to the location of the Holy Places have made any attempt either to reduce divergencies or to suppress contradictions.

An important detail, however, was to arise in the middle of the 5th century. This was the erection in the Valley of Josaphat of a sanctuary designed to enclose one of the tombs dug into the escarpment of the Mount of Olives, at the point where the Mount leveled off into the bed of the Cedron. Such a location was in conformity with certain data of the account concerning the departure, burial, and, consequently, the Assumption of Mary.

The new foundation around the Tomb of the Cedron corre-

⁴ Ed. Note: The Cedron was to the east of Jerusalem.

sponded so closely to the details of ancient literature regarding the burial of Mary that it met with warm approval among the Christian public. Whether this foundation be credited to the Empress Eudoxia or to the Sovereigns of Byzantium, Marcian and Pulcheria—these latter at the behest of Juvenal, Archbishop of Jerusalem and deeply jealous of his Church's prerogatives—there is reason to believe that Imperial hands did contribute. The testimonials of the 6th century are clear, both as to the situation of the Church and the existence of the Tomb. In harmony with certain assertions of the *Transitus*, it was furthermore stated that at Cedron had been situated the house where Mary breathed forth her soul. A Syriac recension described the place as composed of three grottoes. From the first, the most spacious, access lay open to an intermediary grotto opening upon a very tiny room. The eastern side of this room was occupied by an earthen bench, or rather, according to a more acceptable witness, by a long rock settee, on which the traces of the body it had received were to be discerned. Andrew of Crete, preaching one day in the Church of the Virgin at Gethsemani, did not hesitate to cite "that sepulchre hewn from rock, which stands intact to this very day, silently proclaiming the marks of her burial. These are authentic witnesses to the depositing of the Virgin's body in this tomb." The preacher passes on logically to Cedron which surrounds this tomb, then to the monument of (the Valley of) Josaphat, and to the Garden of Gethsemani.

Since the Sanctuary of the tomb of the Virgin had been ruined in the 11th Century, a short time previous to the arrival of the Crusaders before the walls of Jerusalem, one of the first concerns of Godfrey of Bouillon was the restoration of this edifice. Later he was to place the building under the care of the Benedictines who had accompanied him during the Crusade, whence the origin of the Abbey of Notre Dame de Josaphat. The generosity of princes and prelates was not slow in manifesting itself; by 1112 all was ready for the work and the restoration was completed in 1130. The shrine consisted of an upper

church in which the clergy of the different rites could celebrate their offices. Lofty crenelated walls, with formidable towers, insured the sanctuary and the Abbey against any attack of the enemy.

But it was the crypt that once more captured the pious attention of the traveller. As he descended the forty steps of the grand staircase, the pilgrim marvelled at the frescoes covering walls and vaults, especially the scene of the Dormition and funeral of the Virgin, which were executed according to the rules of the "Byzantine Guide For Painting," and were inspired by the popular accounts. Lower down two chapels enshrined royal sepulchres, one of them being that of Queen Melisende, wife of Foulques d'Anjou, daughter of Baudoin II. When the crypt was at last reached, there were to be seen depicted upon its entrance Saint Jerome and Saint Basil. They held phylacteries on which could be read sentences relative to the position of the sepulchre of Mary and to the controversy with the Emperor Julian. The choir of the subterranean church, its center occupied by the tomb portrayed the Assumption scene, which was embellished with many verses drawn from the office for August 15.

As to the tomb itself, the most complete description is given by the Russian Abbot, Daniel, in 1107: "It is a small grotto cut into the rock, with an entrance so low that even bent over a man can hardly pass through. At the far end of the grotto, opposite the entrance, there appears a kind of small bench in the rock; upon this bench the sacred body of our Most Holy Lady, the Mother of God, was laid and thence was borne incorruptible to Paradise. This grotto is scarcely equal in height to the stature of a man; it is four cubits in width and about the same in length. The interior of the grotto has the appearance of a tiny chapel panelled with beautiful marble." Like the tomb of Christ on the outside, the tomb of the Virgin was framed in an arcade placed upon twenty tiny columns, and was crowned by an urn of gold and silver. The tablet which surrounded the sepulchre read:

This is the Valley of Josaphat whence departs the
path toward the stars.

Confident in the Lord, Mary was buried here.

Raised up from this place, stainless she reached
heaven,

Hope of captives, their way, their light and their
Mother.

But all this splendor was short-lived. In 1187, after the triumph of Saladin, the Abbey and all its adjuncts were destroyed, and the materials salvaged from the demolition were employed to stop up the gaps in the city wall. The crypt and its monumental setting, though shorn of their decoration, escaped destruction, assuming, except for the great staircase which is enough to evince the admiration of modern architects, the rather drab appearance which strikes the present-day traveller. The porch, recently restored, has taken on an artistic aspect reminiscent of its original form, as it portrays in a more fitting manner the Virgin invoked under the title *Janua Coeli*.

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THE HISTORY OF THE FEAST OF THE ASSUMPTION

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THERE are many feasts of the Blessed Virgin in the Calendar of the Western and Eastern Churches but of them all the Feast of the Assumption is the greatest and most important. Some regard it as the oldest feast of Our Lady and apparently with good reason. At the present time when attention is directed so much to the doctrine of the bodily Assumption of the Mother of God into heaven it is most opportune to look into the history of this feast, which bears witness to the venerable antiquity of devotion to Mary, as the ever-Virgin and Mother of God. It illustrates in many ways the whole background of the veneration of Saints in the early Church and the manner of the liturgical observance of their *dies natalis*. Besides that it exemplifies the early Christian attitude toward church-building and the honors paid the tombs of the saints, and brings to life many aspects of the entire Liturgy of the Church.

It is well to observe at the outset that the cultus paid the Mother of God by the Church existed long before the institution of any feast in her honor. This veneration was expressed by the building of churches dedicated to Mary by Constantine who is said to have built three churches to her in his new capital on the Golden Horn. Grisar is of the opinion that there was a church dedicated to the Blessed Virgin in Rome long before the Basilica of Saint Mary Major, generally regarded as the oldest church of our Lady in Rome. This is the church of Santa Maria Antiqua and is regarded by Grisar as the oldest church known to have been dedicated to our Lady not only in the Eternal City, but in the world.¹ There was another

¹ Grisar, *History of Rome and the Popes in the Middle Ages*, Vol. I, no. 168.

ancient church dedicated to our Lady at Ephesus which we know existed at the time of the Council there in 431, and there seems to have been still another at Jerusalem which we will have occasion to refer to later on in this article.

There is no certain or definite evidence of a liturgical cult of the Blessed Virgin before the fifth century, and all efforts to discover any traces before that time have failed. But when we remember that the feast of Christmas can be traced to the fourth century it is not surprising that the liturgical cult of Mary should be later. Such veneration is the product of time, of slow maturing and ripening. The decree of the Council of Ephesus in 431 proclaiming Mary as Mother of God gave impetus to honoring her in the Liturgy.

The keeping of the festivals of the saints grew out of the solemn commemoration of the *dies natalis* of the martyrs, which took place at their tombs and was closely related to the place of their burial. Later on this commemoration was extended to the other classes of saints—virgins, confessors, widows. For this reason the place of the death and burial of the Blessed Virgin is of great importance here, because as far as anyone can see the liturgical cultus of the Mother of God followed the same rule; it began with the commemoration of her *dies natalis*.

In the course of time many names have been given to what we call now the Feast of the Assumption. It is interesting and even necessary to consider them because they have been so diverse and various and because of the almost complete changes in meaning they have undergone. The Greeks called it *koimesis*, or "Falling Asleep," which the Latins translated literally into *dormitio* or *pausatio*; sometimes they replaced it by *transitus* or *depositio*. Strictly speaking the first two refer to the death of the Blessed Virgin, but we must beware of a too narrow interpretation of the word, because these words in practice included the idea, not only of the death but also the resurrection and the assumption. The same is true of the other two Latin names which are used in the martyrologies. They all have a wider meaning than at first appears.² On the other hand, the word

² Cabrol, "Assumption," *Dictionnaire Archéologique et Liturgique*.

Assumption, *ad sumptio*, which is used now exclusively of the Blessed Virgin and to denote her bodily resurrection and ascension into heaven, was used in ancient Christian writers to describe the death of the martyrs, and later other saints, and also their entrance into heaven. Saint Augustine and other Fathers have sermons entitled *In Assumptione Episcopi*, sermons preached at the funerals of Bishops.³

About the place of Mary's death and burial there has been considerable discussion and there are two opinions on the question, one in favor of Ephesus and the other, with the greater weight of evidence on its side, in favor of Jerusalem. Since ancient tradition brings St. John to Ephesus and since the fourth Gospel tells us that the Blessed Virgin was confided to his care it was natural that some should think that she would have gone there too (unless of course she had died before). The best argument for her stay at Ephesus, and the only serious historical claim that has been advanced is the rather obscure text from the letter which the Fathers of the Council of Ephesus in 431 sent to the clergy and people of Constantinople. This letter says that Nestorius was condemned in Ephesus "where John the divine and the Virgin Mother of God. . . ." *entha ho theologos Ioannes, kai he Theotokos parthenos he Hagia Maria*.⁴ The exact meaning of this phrase is a puzzle, but if the word "are" is supplied it might be taken as a reference to their tombs or perhaps to their association with the city during life. In line with this supposition we have the fact that there was a church at Ephesus dedicated to the Mother of God. Now, in Christian antiquity the presence of a church dedicated to someone is a strong presumption in favor of the existence of a tomb there, or of notable relics, or at least of some association with the titular saint. On the other hand, we have the fact that Constantine built churches in honor of our Lady at Constantinople and no one pretends there was any connection between Mary and that city at that time

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Labbe, *Concil.* (ed. 1671), t. III, vol. 573.

or before. So the presence of a church is no certain sign of the presence of a tomb. But it is hard to see why they made any reference to the Blessed Virgin at all if no more than the presence of a church was meant. It would seem more like an allusion to some connection that Mary as well as St. John had with Ephesus.

There is a much more imposing array of witnesses in favor of Jerusalem as the place of Mary's death and burial. The apocryphal literature of the early church, which is of some value because of its antiquity and the ever present possibility that it is reproducing old and half-forgotten traditions, and because of its unanimity on this point, testifies in favor of the Jerusalem tradition. Besides this there is the testimony offered by the accounts that early pilgrims give of their visits to Palestine, and by a few other witnesses. We know too that there was a church dedicated to Mary at a very early date near the Mount of Olives and Gethsemane, where her tomb was pointed out. An itinerary of 570, ascribed to the Holy Land, speaks of the basilica of the Blessed Virgin in the Valley of Gethsemani "in which is shown the tomb from which they say that holy Mary was taken into heaven."⁵

The historian, Nicephorus, relates that the Bishop of Jerusalem in 451, Juvenal, upon being asked by the Emperor Marcian where the body of the Blessed Virgin was kept, because he wished to transfer it to a new church in Constantinople, answered that her body was in heaven, but the tomb and shroud were in Jerusalem. The Emperor had to be satisfied with these relics which were placed in the Church of the Blanchernae.⁶ We do not know his authority for this statement and some regard his witness as too late to be convincing, but there is no ignoring the testimony of the itineraries which at least evidence the existence of a tradition.

About the year 429 Proclus, in preaching a most elaborate panegyric on the Blessed Virgin at Constantinople began by

⁵ Tobler, *Itinera et descriptiones Terrae Sanctae*, I, 100.

⁶ Nicephorus, "Historia Eccl.," Bk. xv, c. 14, in *PG CXLVII*, 44.

saying that "The Virgin's festival (*parthenike paneguris*) incites our tongue today to herald her praise."⁷ The word *paneguris* both in classical Greek and in the liturgical language of more modern times has the meaning of "high festival." But it is not in itself enough to show that it was any more than a "commemoration" of the Blessed Virgin in connection with the feast of Christmas. Much the same must be said of the earlier date (370) assigned by Baumstark for a commemoration held at Antioch in honor of the Blessed Virgin (*Mneme tes agias Theotokou*).⁸ A fourth century Greek martyrology testifies that it was the custom to commemorate those who bore any relation to the Word Incarnate at some time near Christmas. But there is not enough evidence of a feast properly so called.

Jugie contends that the feast of the Dormition or "Falling Asleep" of the Blessed Virgin, which is the forerunner of what we know as the Feast of the Assumption arose out of the primitive solemnity (or commemoration) of the Blessed Virgin mentioned above. It is his conviction that this primitive "Mary-day" was concerned only with celebrating the dignity of Mary, her virginal motherhood, and her role as the new Eve. Only with the passing of time, and under the influence of the apocryphal writings, particularly *Transitus Mariae*, was the emphasis shifted to her death and ultimately to her Assumption.⁹ He seems to assign no importance to the topographical question which Cabrol insists upon as providing us with a necessary understanding of the question.

Remembering the close connection between liturgical commemorations and the tomb of the saint commemorated we should expect to find that the first feast-day of our Lady should have its origin at her tomb. The first certain evidence of the observance of such a festival that is truly a feast day is found in the panegyric of St. Theodosius,⁹ written about the

⁷ Proclus, "Laudat. in Ss. Dei Gen. Mariam," in PG LXV, 679.

⁸ *Romanische Quartalschrift*, 1897, p. 55.

⁹ Jugie, *La Mort et l'Assumption de la Sainte Vierge*, p. 174.

⁹ *Acta Sanctorum*, Jan. 11, p. 690.

year 529. In this we are told that a commemoration of the Holy Mother of God (*Theotokou mneme*) was celebrated annually in the monasteries of Palestine. There is no date given this feast nor any mention of a specific name.

There is no doubt that the feast of the Assumption itself is Eastern in origin and that it spread from the East to the West. It first emerged in the clear light of day with the decree of the Emperor Maurice, about the year 600 which ordained that the "Falling Asleep," or *Koimesis*, of the Mother of God should be celebrated on the 15th of August. Notice that Nicephorus does not say that the Emperor instituted the feast; he ordered that it should be celebrated on the 15th of August.¹⁰ It would seem that it existed long before that and that he was merely setting a date for its observance. In any case the prestige of his patronage caused the feast and the date to be adopted everywhere in the East. Long before the decree of the Emperor Maurice we can find indications that the feast mentioned so clearly at that time probably existed long before. It is true that it comes into the clear light of day for the first time with his proclamation in 600, but this does not exclude the possibility of an earlier observance of a feast comparable to it. Historians of the feast are inclined to see traces of it in the fifth century.

We could expect that the Syrian Church, with its almost ecstatic devotion to Mary would be among the leaders in establishing the liturgical cult of Mary. Leaving aside the hymns of James of Sarugh, because the authenticity of the relevant texts is contested, we find that the Syrian apocrypha of the *Transitus Mariae* say that the Apostles coming from the Assumption ordained that a threefold commemoration of our Lady should be observed.¹¹ The apocrypha may err in assigning the commemorations to the Apostles, of course, but the reference shows that they were in existence and recognized in the calendar of the Syrian Church of the time. One of these feasts is given as occurring on the 13th day of Ab, that is about

¹⁰ Nicephorus, *op. cit.*, 292.

¹¹ Wright, *Journal of Sacred Literature*. These apocrypha are preserved in a codex of the fifth or sixth century.

the middle of August. The document mentions one of those feasts (not the one occurring in August) as the day set aside to commemorate Mary's birthday, i. e., her entry into heaven.

At a little later date there is evidence of churches dedicated to Mary in Egypt and of a festival in her honor celebrated on what corresponds to the 16th or 17th of January in our calendar.¹² This is especially interesting in view of the fact that Gregory of Tours tells us that in the Gaul of his time, that is, in the sixth century, there was a great feast kept in honor of the Blessed Virgin in the middle of the month of January.¹³ It is true that neither the Egyptian nor the Gallican feast is called the Assumption, but as Gregory mentions it in almost immediate connection with a reference to Mary's bodily assumption it is likely that there was an association in his mind between the feast and the belief.

The feast of August 15 retained its old name of *Mneme tes Theotokou* in the liturgical books of the Byzantine church, even after the proclamation of the emperor which mentioned its technical name as *Koimesis*, the "Falling Asleep." It was some time before *Koimesis* was used at all. Even to this day the word *Mneme* (commemoration) is retained in the title with the addition of the words "of the Falling Asleep of the *Theotokos*." This gives some support to Jugie's contention that the Feast of the Dormition, later to be the feast of the Assumption is a transformation of the primitive "Feast of Mary," which in turn began as a commemoration. The new term prevailed from the beginning of the seventh century onward. Side by side with it was another name, *Metastasis* (Migration) which appears over and over in the sermons of the later Greek orators. It is curious that the word which most corresponds to the Latin *Assumptio*, *analapsis*, is hardly used at all, except in the verb form. Perhaps the fact that it is the traditional word used to express the Ascension of our Lord worked against its use for any other idea.

¹² Thurston, "Feast of the Assumption," *Month* CXXX, 128.

¹³ St. Gregory of Tours, "De Gloria Martyrum," Bk. L, chap. 9, in *PL* LXX, 713.

The Syrian menologies call the Assumption by various names: the Death, the Passing Away, the Departure, of the Mother of God; sometimes they too retain the ancient term Memorial or Commemoration. The Copts and Ethiopians follow their ancient custom of having two feasts, one the Death or Falling Asleep in January, the other the feast of August, called the Assumption of the Mother of God. The Armenians call it the Assumption, but celebrate it on the Sunday nearest August 15.

The object of the feast took more definite form in the Eastern churches during the eight century; the background of the celebration is shown in the homilies of the eighth century Doctors, Sts. Andrew of Crete, Germanus of Constantinople, and John Damascene. Their teaching is not always clear, it is true, but they represent a development of the doctrine. In the East, as in Gaul, there seems to have been a variety of opinions on the question, and some of this uncertainty about the real meaning of the feast is reflected in the tenth-century liturgical books. There are texts which clearly affirm the doctrine of the assumption of the body, and others which speak only of the assumption of the soul. Still others are altogether ambiguous and imprecise. In more modern times the doctrine was affirmed more clearly by additions or corrections in these books.

The Feast of the Dormition passed over from the East to the West; the first church to receive it, with its date, August 15, was the Roman church. It is rather surprising that the feasts of the Blessed Virgin developed so late in the very centre of Christendom. There is no certain proof of a feast day properly so called before the seventh century. It is true that the *Canon*, a sixth-century document, has a profoundly reverent allusion to her name in the *Communicantes*, and that a day was consecrated to her in a special way, the Ember Wednesday in Advent. Later on special notice was given her on the Octave Day of Christmas, traces of which still remain in our liturgy. But it still remains true that, at a time when many of the other churches in the West had some kind of feast or solemnity in honor of Mary, there is nothing resembling them at Rome itself until the time of Sergius I (687-701), who ordered that the

people should go in procession from St. Adrian to Saint Mary Major on the five feasts associated with our Lady—the Annunciation, the Dormition, the Birthday of the Blessed Virgin, and Candlemas.¹⁴ Sergius does not say that he is introducing these feasts; indeed, it would seem that he is assuming their existence, and ordering that they be becomingly celebrated.

It was already some decades since Maurice had fixed the feast at Constantinople, and it is entirely possible that, given the Byzantine influence at Rome in the seventh century, this festival was already adopted by the Roman church by the time that Sergius had become Pope. Otherwise it seems hard to believe that he would have established four new feasts all at once, for if he be credited with being the author of one, he must be the author of the others, on the same evidence. What is certain is that the Roman church was the first to receive the Byzantine feast under its early name of Dormition or Falling Asleep (*Koimesis*) of the Mother of God, with the August 15 date. From Rome the feast and the date passed into other parts of Italy, to England, Spain, and, ultimately, to Frankish dominions, by the ninth century. Meanwhile the earlier name of the feast, Dormition, and its variants, *Pausatio*, *Depositio*, *Natale*, were abandoned at Rome during the eighth century in favor of *Adsumptio* or *Assumptio*.

In Gaul the history of the liturgical cult of the Blessed Virgin begins very early. The whole question is complicated by the introduction of the Roman liturgical books in the eight century, and the resulting gradual decline of the old Gallican rite. The documents of this primitive Gallican rite, before the admixture and subsequent triumph of the Roman rite, all testify to the existence of a *Festivitas Mariae* which was celebrated on January 18 and which goes back to the sixth century. At the beginning of that century St. Caesarius of Arles in one of his homilies alludes to it,¹⁵ and the *Martyrologium Hieronymianum*, which is a sixth century document, at least in the Auxerre

¹⁴ *Liber Pontificalis* (ed. Duchesne), I, 376.

¹⁵ *Revue Benedictine* V, 1888.

recension, calls this *festivitas, Depositio Sanctae Mariae*, which would mean that it is a commemoration of the death (but not of the Assumption) of the Blessed Virgin.¹⁶ The remnants of the liturgy used in Gaul at that time show that the feast was concerned with such general topics as the maternity and virginity of Mary.¹⁷ Nothing is said about the Assumption, although Gregory of Tours writing at the same time witnesses to popular belief in this privilege of our Lady. Apparently popular devotion was supplying what was wanting in the official texts. But there is also the uncontrovertible fact, already mentioned in these pages, that Gregory mentions, in connection with his remarks on the bodily assumption, a feast in her honor celebrated in January, in such a way as to appear to say that it is a feast of the Assumption.

The *Festivitas Mariae* became in time, under Roman influence, the *Dormitio* and then the *Assumptio*. Finally the date changed from January 18 to August 15. Certain Gallican theologians hesitated about the new terminology of the Feast of Mary and for a time the feast of the Assumption was in danger of being suppressed. The Council of Mainz in 813 settled that question by making it one of the holydays. But the reluctance of some to celebrate it as a feast glorifying the privilege of the bodily assumption remained. This doctrine appeared to these men to be rash because they felt it was unsupported by scripture or tradition. They were quite willing to observe the *Dormitio* or *Pausatio*, to honor Mary's virginity and her dignity of Mother of God, but so far as they were concerned, it was better to leave the whole matter of the assumption alone.

This attitude was given expression by the circulation of a spurious document attributed to Saint Jerome, the *Letter of Paula to Eustochium*, which warned people against being carried away too much by such apocryphal works as the *Transitus Mariae* and insisted on an agnostic attitude toward the question. The pseudo-Jerome had enough influence to arouse objections to the doctrine in the Frankish realm. Even more than that, it passed into the Liturgy and was read in the lessons for Matins

¹⁶ Capelle, *Eph. Theol. Lov.* III, 35.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

on the feast of the Assumption even to the sixteenth century.¹⁸ It influenced the ninth century martyrology of Usuard which was adopted by the Roman church and used until the time of Baronius in 1584, and by many of the religious orders. The notice it gave for the feast gave expression to a discreet agnosticism on the subject.¹⁹ The object of the feast remained ambiguous and the influence of pseudo-Jerome paralysed devotion to the bodily assumption for centuries.

But if Martyrology and Office passed over the Assumption it is not neglected in the Missal of the Gallican rite. The Preface of the Mass of the Assumption in the Bobbio Missal says, "*virgo Dei Genetrix Maria de mundo migravit ad Christum germine gloriosa, adsumptione secura. . . Recte ab eo suscepta es in adsumptione feliciter . . . ut quae terrae non eras conscia te non teneret rupes inclusa. Vere diversis infulis anima redimta, cui apostoli sacrum reddunt obsequium, angeli cantum . . . adsumptio paradisum.*"²⁰ Another Gallican missal, like the Bobbio from the eighth century adds, *quae nec de corruptione suscepit contagium, nec resolutionem pertulit in sepulchro. . .*²¹ Again, the Gothic Missal (so-called) has, "*. . . nec per Assumptionem de morte sensit inluviem, quae vitae portavit Auctorem. . . Dominum imploremus, ut eius indulgentia illuc defuncti liberentur a tartaro, quo beatae Virginis translatus Corpus est de Sepulchro.*"²² These passages appear to be clear enough affirmations of the resurrection of Mary's body and the assumption of her body as well as her soul. Yet it might be argued that they are not clear enough inasmuch as they do not really affirm the assumption of the body but only of the soul, while the body is preserved from corruption and brought to a special place, a kind of Limbo. The only way out would be the use of the clear term resurrection, and that is not used.

Like Gaul, Spain originally had only one feast of the Blessed Virgin and with the same name, *Festivitas Sanctae Mariae*. It

¹⁸ Juges, "Assumption de la Sainte Vierge," in *Maria*, p. 646.

¹⁹ In *PL* CXXIV, 565-566.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 245.

²⁰ In *PL* LXXII, 476.

²² *Ibid.*

was celebrated neither in January nor August, but in December, and like the early *memoria Mariae* at Rome, was celebrated in connection with Christmas, with emphasis on the Annunciation and the Motherhood of Mary. No other feast of the Blessed Virgin was celebrated in Spain before the ninth or tenth century, when the Assumption was added on August 15, apparently under Roman influence. The same, in broad outline, is true of the other venerable Latin rite of Milan; it had its *memoria Mariae* in December, which became a very solemn feast. In the ninth century, too, the Milanese added the feast of the Assumption on August 15.

What has been written so far makes it clear enough that even before the Emperor Maurice issued his decree fixing August 15 as the date of the celebration of the Assumption in the Eastern Empire some festival of the same kind was being kept in the East and in the West. Whether this feast laid any stress on the manner of our Lady's departure from this world no one, in the absence of contemporary texts, can say. Apparently the occasion of the feast was her entrance into heaven, her *dies natalis*, as it was with all the saints at that time, and beyond that they did not seem to be concerned by it.

By the ninth century the feast of the Assumption was celebrated everywhere. About 847 Leo IV ordered that it should be celebrated in Rome with an octave and a vigil to be kept by the clergy and the people in the Basilica of Saint Mary Major and that on the Octave Day the station should be celebrated outside the Porta Tiburina in the Basilica Maior dedicated to the Blessed Virgin, which had been built by Sixtus III.²³ From the ninth century it has been a holy-day of obligation and Boniface VIII gave it the right to be celebrated like the great feasts of Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost even in countries which were under interdict.

The great support given the doctrine during the High Middle Ages, especially by St. Thomas, St. Albert the Great, and St. Bonaventure, helped to liberate it from the harm done by those who had opposed it, although Pseudo-Jerome still had its

²³ Schuster, *Sacramentary*, V, p. 32.

partisans. By the sixteenth century, however, this fraudulent document was banished from the office books and Usuard's misleading martyrology gave place to Baronius. The term *Dormitio* was abandoned altogether and emphasis placed on the Assumption instead. The Assumption had definitely taken its place as the greatest of Mary's feasts and the solemnity of the fifteenth of August had become one of the greatest feasts of the liturgical year.

The spirit of the feast as reflected in the liturgical books is inextricably bound up with the history of the feast. The chants of the primitive Roman feast made no direct allusion to the Assumption itself as they do today.²⁴ The emphasis was placed upon the virginity of the Blessed Virgin. The Introit was *Vultum Tuum*, the Gradual and Alleluia, *Propter Veritatem* and *Specie tua*, Offertory, *Offerentur Tibi*, the Communion, *Dilexisti*. Nor, as we might think, was the Gospel chosen because of its last verse, "*Optimam partem elegit sibi Maria quae non auferetur ab ea in aeternum*," which expresses so well the idea of Mary's passing into the eternal possession of heaven. Rather it was at the time of its selection a popular gospel for masses of virgin-saints, because it was felt to express the idea of the virgins' choice, the better part—contemplation of the Lord. The same is true of the first lesson or epistle still used in the Mass of the Feast. It speaks of seeking rest and obtaining it. But it is the rest of contemplation, and is the counterpart of the Gospel which was meant to express the same idea.

At a later date, perhaps as a result of doubts that were expressed by some ninth century authors about the bodily Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, the chants were altered to their present form, in which the Assumption is mentioned often and explicitly. The Communion Antiphon was taken from the Gospel, which remained in the Mass and the words were given the emphasis we now associate with "*Optimam partem elegit sibi Maria, quae non auferetur ab ea in aeternum*." But if the chants of the early Masses did not refer to the Assumption the same can not be said of the prayer parts, which are more explicit

²⁴ Capelle, *op. cit.*, III, 39-40.

than the prayers of the present Roman Missal. The Secret Prayer of the Mass for August 15 in the Gelasian sacramentary asks that the Lord may receive the oblation we offer on this second solemnity of the Blessed Mary, "for it redounds to the praise of thy glory that so noble a virgin should be taken up into heaven."²⁵

The Gregorian Sacramentary is even more explicit when, in the first collect for the Assumption, it speaks of "this solemnity in which the holy Mother of God endured temporal death, but remained free from its fetters" (*. . . diei festivitas in qua Sancta Dei Genetrix mortem subiit temporalem, nec tamen mortis nexibus deprimi potuit*).²⁶ None of these prayers, however, and those of the present Roman missal even less so, are sufficiently clear and definite affirmation of the teaching of the Church. It may be that after the dogma is proclaimed more explicit reference to the bodily Assumption will be incorporated into the prayers.

The reason for the two dates—January 18 and August 15—is not altogether clear. Both dates were used in the East, some parts following the one and some the other, but the January date seems to have been the first used in the West. As far as anyone can tell at the present the first date is the oldest, and the Emperor Maurice substituted the 15th of August for some reason. What was that reason? Dom Capelle offered a solution drawn from his investigation of the Apocrypha which deal with the Assumption. The Coptic accounts of the death of the Virgin are all agreed in putting the death of the Blessed Virgin on the 20 or 21 Tobi (which is our month of January). But when they tell of the Assumption one assigns it to the next day while the other three place it on the 16th of Messre (our month of August). Capelle regards the interposition of 206 days between the death and the assumption as a later development of the original tradition which these apocryphal accounts preserve. The 18th of January is the original and

²⁵ Wilson, *The Gelasian Sacramentary*, p. 193.

²⁶ In *PL* LXXVIII, 133.

only primitive date, the death and the assumption being united together. Later on when the legend of the two hundred intervening days grew up the Assumption properly so called was transferred to August 15th. The new date overshadowed the old so that the Solemnity of the fifteenth of August remained the only one, to do duty for the commemoration of both events.²⁷

The custom of blessing herbs on this day in certain countries appears to be another example of how the Church has tried to adapt old pagan customs and purify them. It can not be shown to have any definite connection with the feast, although some writers see in it a connection with the ancient legend that the Apostles found nothing in Mary's grave but freshly blooming flowers.

For thirteen centuries at least the feast of the Assumption has been celebrated in the church under different titles and with varying emphasis. It remains in the liturgical books of East and West today as a precious expression of the deep veneration the ever-Blessed Virgin has commanded from the Church almost from the very beginning. It is pre-eminently Mary's feast, her *Dies Natalis*, the day of her triumphant entry into heaven. The present feast is the product of long development. At first a commemoration of her birthday into heaven, without any stress laid on the manner of her departure from this world, the feast becomes with the passing of centuries, first the *Dormitio* or *Transitus* and finally the *Assumptio*, as more and more the unique place of Mary and a consequent appreciation of her privilege is borne in upon the minds of men. One of the greatest feasts of the Church, now and for so many centuries it will take on added lustre by the proclamation, so long awaited and prayed for, of the Dogma of the Bodily Assumption of the *Theotokos*, the Mother of God.

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²⁷ Capelle, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

A BIBLIOGRAPHY OF THE ASSUMPTION

IT is not our purpose to furnish our readers with a complete bibliography on Our Lady's Assumption. This would be almost impossible, and indeed beyond the means at our disposal, considering the vast proportions of the literature on the subject. Hence a limited selection has seemed imperative. We shall pass over in silence, for example, the hundreds of homilies written in honor of Mary's prerogative from the sixth century up to the present time. Excerpts of these, for the period preceding the Council of Trent, will be found in C. Balić, O. F. M., *Testimonia de Assumptione Beatae Virginis Mariae ex omnibus saeculis*; pars prior (Romae, 1948). Those written in more recent times are accessible in the various collections of sermons, homiletic reviews, and similar sets intended for the convenience of preachers. For reasons of brevity we shall likewise omit all reference to manuals of theology and general works on Mariology which devote a special section or chapter to this doctrine. For the most part, our list of publications will include books, pamphlets and magazine articles dealing exclusively with Mary's Assumption¹ and written within the last one hundred years. For the sake of convenience we shall follow the alphabetical order.

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